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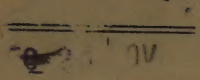

D'ARTAGNAN TOOK EVERY SMILE FOR AN INSULT.—p. 4.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

ILLUSTRATED BY
MAURICE LELOIR

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INTRODUCTION.

1626–1628.

The Three Musketeers is the first of a series of three novels bearing ostensibly upon the lives and deeds of four adventurers, but really depicting the court life of France during the closing years of Louis XIII.'s reign and the opening years of the reign of the Grand Monarch, Louis XIV. To be exact, our chronicle begins on an April morning in the year 1626 with the appearance of its chief hero, D'Artagnan, and closes in 1671 with his death. The record is not continuous, but so far as it goes it is a marvellously faithful picture of the times.

The Three Musketeers covers nearly three years — 1626–1628. Louis XIII., never a strong king, has become completely dominated by Cardinal Richelieu, who was elevated to the prime ministry in 1624. Naturally there was some friction between the servants of the ostensible prince and the emissaries of the real potentate. D'Artagnan and his three musketeer friends belonging to the king's troops, must display all their adroitness to escape being crushed by the millstone of the cardinal's wrath.

Twenty Years After, as its title indicates, picks up the narrative again, for something like a twelvemonth, beginning with the year 1648. Louis XIII. is dead; Richelieu is dead. France, the child-king Louis XIV., and the Queen-Regent are all in the hands of Cardinal Mazarin. The famous struggle called the Fronde, on the part of disaffected nobles, breaks out. D'Artagnan and his friends are considerably interested in the affair from both sides.

The Vicomte de Bragelonne chooses a period a little more than "Ten Years Later," — 1660–1671, — one of the most momentous eras in the history of France. The young King Louis XIV. is commencing to grow in power and assume proportions ominous and threatening on the international horizon. The four comrades-in-arms are beginning to feel the weight of years, but until their death are alert and vigorous in the affairs of more than one nation.

Such is the brief outline of the period covered by the D'Artagnan romances. The two sequels to the *Musketeers* will of course be dealt with again in their proper place. But the reader will become interested in each period as he reaches it through the medium of the particular story; and having finished the story, he will be sorely tempted to study history and find out for himself how much is fact and how much fiction. He will be astonished to find how closely Dumas hedges upon real characters and real occurrences; how ingeniously the imaginary occurrences are made to explain the genuine ones; and how vitally the novelist has interested him in names which before greeted his eye meaninglessly upon musty records.

Looking again at *The Three Musketeers* for a moment (and it will be only for a moment, since the genial Dumas must be allowed to explain himself), we find that the plot presents three problematic threads, as follows: (1) How may an awkward, unknown Gascon youth ride to Paris on a sorry nag, and there become the sworn companion of the three best blades in the city, and finally a lieutenant of musketeers; (2) how may be preserved the honor of a queen who has foolishly given away her necklace; (3) how may the plans, political and personal, of an unscrupulous woman be thwarted. Though the three threads are distinct, they are not traced separately, but are woven into one strand by an ingenuity capable to few besides Dumas. He handles each separate episode in a way that absorbs the entire attention; then within a page or two he will transfer that attention to an utterly different point, so dexterously that the reader hardly realizes the change.

For the first of the problems Dumas frankly confesses (in his preface) indebtedness to the *Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan*, an actual record which furnished him with the figures of D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, Aramis, Milady, — not to speak of such historic characters as the King, the Queen, and Richelieu.

Dumas cunningly muddles his sources by alluding also in the preface to a *Memoir of the Comte de la Fère* that does not exist.

The second of the problems — the affair of the queen's necklace — is based closely upon history. George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the favorite of Charles I. of England, was sent as an ambassador to the court of France to further a matrimonial alliance between the Prince of Wales (afterwards Charles II.) and Henrietta Maria, sister of the French king. While there Buckingham became violently enamored of Queen Anne. Cardinal Richelieu was bitterly hostile to the Queen at that time, the enmity being due — so creditable authorities assert — to the fact that the Queen had previously spurned the cardinal as a suitor. When Buckingham's love for her became court talk the cardinal sought to entrap her in a net. His spies watched the smallest action between her and the duke, but watched futilely until, upon the duke's departure for England, the Queen gave her lover a necklace which was a present to her from the King. The manner in which the cardinal well-nigh turned the incident into the destruction of the Queen is true very nearly as Dumas relates it, except that history — dull history! — neglects to mention that D'Artagnan and his comrades, by their brilliant exploit in rescuing the necklace, were really instrumental in preserving the honor of a queen.

The third problem, relating to Milady, strikingly illustrates Dumas' skill in cementing fact with fancy. He had already the figure of Milady, the adventuress in the *Memoir of D'Artagnan*. He made her the terrible agent in Richelieu's hands against Buckingham. She it was who corrupted the fanatic Felton and caused him to assassinate the duke. We had known previously that Felton's hand did the deed; we had not known why. Milady's political plans were sometimes successful, but her personal schemes were destined to be frustrated at the hands of D'Artagnan and his friends. This struggle of scheme against scheme lasts entirely through the book. Though she is only a woman and pitted against four of the most adroit men in the kingdom, Milady proves no unworthy foe. The interest is strained — intense — at the last. And the chapters relating her judgment and execution have a solemn grandeur thoroughly befitting this great climax of the book.

First and foremost in interest comes the character of D'Artagnan. Few other characters in fiction rival in sustained

interest this swaggering Gascon. Only once beside does Dumas himself create another hero so undying: Edmond Dantes, the mysterious Count of Monte Cristo. D'Artagnan's evolution is gradual. We laugh at first at the ludicrous figure he cuts before the walls of Paris. We notice that he is impertinent, presumptuous, and uncouth. But the moment his resolute rapier is bared he commands respect. Nevertheless he cannot fight all the time; and in the councils of peace he is often rash, though clear-headed withal. His stern commonsense now comes to his aid, teaching him in the harsh school of experience the wisdom of coolness, prudence, and counsel, — traits which we find constantly increasing in the two sequels, and which conjoined with his dexterity, foresight, and intrepidity, made him worthily a Marshal of France. But it is D'Artagnan the young, D'Artagnan the rash, that we learn to love in *The Three Musketeers*. We could wish that he had not practised deceit in his amours with Milady, treacherous though she was. He himself made public confession of this deceit, many years afterward (see *Vicomte de Bragelonne*). But his bravery and devotion to friends and to duty offset and condone such errors as hot-blooded youth will commit. Any faults that D'Artagnan might have were like himself — frank, open, and daring.

The three musketeers are not outlined so sharply and individually as they are in the subsequent books. Athos the drinking, devil-may-care fellow is totally unlike the calm, dignified aristocrat of after years. His character, perhaps, is not so consistently drawn as are the others. Nevertheless, he was obviously playing a part while in the musketeers, a part which he could doff when he removed the uniform of the company. Athos is always Athos in his ideals, truth, and honor. Aramis gives to the discerning an inkling of the future prelate and crafty Jesuit. He must continually have something to conceal — in his younger days assignations with some court lady, in his latter days plots which imperilled the safety of thrones. Porthos is treated more broadly and generously in the other volumes. The part he plays here is comparatively unimportant and gives merely an impression of the vain, good-natured, chivalrous Titan who is ready to lay down his life at a friend's bidding, after following that friend to the end of the world.

The wonderful cunning of Milady has previously been touched upon, but her figure is worthy of a second glance. In her, Dumas succeeded in creating one of the most wicked types in fiction, a type that has been consciously imitated ever since by melodramatists. Milady, however, is not melodramatic in the worst sense of the term. She is so subtle in her villainy as to dignify it and almost to inspire respect for it. At the scene of her execution the men whom she had cruelly wronged were taxed to the limit of their fortitude to brook her punishment. They shuddered and had much ado to keep from pardoning a viper that they knew would strike again at the first opportunity. And the reader also is almost willing to have her released. This faculty of arousing respect for the criminal approaches the genius of Shakespeare, which put souls into Shylock and Iago.

Richelieu is not treated very leniently by Dumas, in common with many historians and romancers. The great cardinal has not been meted out justice. Dumas is willing to admit for him proficiency in state-craft and activity in national affairs. But linking him with the petty wickednesses of Milady must be transcending historic verity, which at the worst makes him the persecutor of the Queen. Richelieu's true character has met with so much discussion, pro and con, that the final arbiter must be the impress left by his career upon the annals of France — an impress beneficent and lasting, paving the way for the glorious dynasty of Louis XIV.

Anne of Austria is the only royal character occupying attention in all three of the series. In *The Three Musketeers* she is the youthful queen whose fair name is preserved by D'Artagnan and his friends. In *Twenty Years After* she is the queen-regent, haughty and forgetful of past services till they are brought forcibly to her attention by D'Artagnan. In *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* she is the aged queen-mother whose power departs as that of Louis XIV. approaches.

In conclusion, an unusual fact may be noted concerning the D'Artagnan romances. Their impelling motive is not love for women, but the friendship of man for man. Surely Dumas' ideals are not meanly placed! It is of devotion and honor and chivalry that he speaks most willingly; of a friendship uninspired by hope of reward, unalloyed by sexual desire; of

a community of interests that could spend the last franc or the last drop of blood in a friend's behalf. His men are men of common clay, prone to sin and error and weakness; but the clay is fired in a crucible of constancy, and emerges as vessels fit for the treasuring of heroic deeds.

J. WALKER MCSPADDEN.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA, Queen of France.
ARAMIS, one of the Three Musketeers.
ATHOS, one of the Three Musketeers.
BARADAS, DE, of the court.
BASSOMPIERRE, DE, officer in the royal troops.
BAZIN, lackey to Aramis.
BERNAJOUX, DE, of the Cardinal's Guards.
BICARAT, of the Cardinal's Guards.
BONACIEUX, JACQUES MICHEL, retired mercer; landlord to D'Artagnan.
BONACIEUX, MME. CONSTANCE, wife of foregoing.
BRISEMONT, soldier.
BUCKINGHAM, GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF, of the English Court.
BUSIGNY, DE, officer in the royal troops.
BUTLER, CAPTAIN, commanding an English sloop.
CAHUSAC, DE, of the Cardinal's Guards.
CAVOIS, DE, captain of the Cardinal's Guards.
CHARLES I., King of England.
CHEVREUSE, DUCHESSE DE, confidante of Anne of Austria; also known as Marie Michon.
COQUENARD, procureur.
COQUENARD, MME., wife of foregoing.
CRAMAIL, COMTE DE, of the court.
CURATE OF MONTDIDIER.
D'ANGOULÊME, DUC, officer in the royal troops.
D'ARTAGNAN, SENIOR, a gentleman of Gascony.
D'ARTAGNAN, MME., wife of foregoing.
D'ARTAGNAN, son of foregoing, an adventurer, cadet in the King's Guards, and finally lieutenant of the musketeers.
D'ELBEUF, DUC, of the court.

D'Harcourt, Comte, of the court.
D'Orléans, Gaston, Duc, brother of Louis XIII.
Duhallier, captain of guards.
Essarts, Des, captain in the King's Guards.
Estefana, Doña, Spanish confidante of Anne of Austria.
Executioner of Lille.
Felton, John, lieutenant for Lord de Winter.
Fourreau, lackey.
Godeau, steward of the musketeers.
Grimaud, lackey to Athos.
Guémenée, Mme. de, of the Queen's household.
Guitaut, De, captain of the Guards.
Guitaut, Mme. de, wife of foregoing, of the Queen's household.
Jackson, secretary to Duke of Buckingham.
Jussac, De, an officer of the Cardinal's Guards.
Kitty, maid to Milady.
La Chesnaye, valet of Louis XIII.
La Coste, Sieur de, ensign in the King's Guards.
La Houdeniére, captain in the Cardinal's Guards.
Lannoy, De, confidential agent of Richelieu.
Laporte, servant to the Queen.
La Trémouille, Duc de, of the court.
La Vieuville, of the court.
Liancourt, De, of the court.
Longueville, Duc de, of the court.
Louis XIII., King of France.
Lubin, lackey to Comte de Wardes.
Milady, (Charlotte Backson, Lady Clarick Winter, Baroness of Sheffield), sister-in-law of Lord Winter, Athos' former wife; confidential agent of Richelieu.
Montaran, De, musketeer.
Montbazan, Mme. de, of the Queen's household.
Mousqueton, lackey to Porthos.
O'Reilly, London goldsmith.
Patrick, servant to Duke of Buckingham.
Planchet, lackey to D'Artagnan.
Porthos, one of the Three Musketeers.
Richelieu, Armand Jean Duplessis, Cardinal, Prime Minister of France.
Rochefort, Comte de, in service of Richelieu.
Roche-Guyon, Comte de la, of the court.

Sablé, Mme. de, of the Queen's household.
Schomberg, De, officer in the royal troops.
Séguier, De, keeper of the seals.
Soissons, Comte de, of the court.
Souveray, Chevalier de, of the court.
Superior of the Carmelite Convent at Béthune.
Superior of the Jesuits.
Surgis, Mme. de, confidential agent of Richelieu.
Toirac, De, officer in the royal troops.
Tréville, De, captain of the King's musketeers.
Vitray, servant of Richelieu.
Wardes, Comte de, in service of Richelieu.
Winter, Baron of Sheffield, Lord, of the English court.

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PREFACE

in which it is proved that, notwithstanding their names in *os* and *is*, the heroes of the history which we are about to have the honor of relating to our readers have nothing mythological about them.

About a year ago, while making researches in the Royal Library for my History of Louis XIV., I stumbled by chance upon the Memoirs of Monsieur d'Artagnan, like most of the works of that period, when authors could not tell the truth without the risk of a longer or shorter residence in the Bastille — printed at Amsterdam, by Pierre Rouge. The title struck me. I took them home with me, of course with the librarian's permission, and devoured them.

It is not my intention here to enter upon an analysis of this curious work, and I shall satisfy myself with referring to its pages those of my readers who may appreciate the pictures of the period. They will find in it portraits pencilled by the hand of a master; and, though these sketches may be generally traced on the doors of barracks and the walls of taverns, they will find there the likenesses of Louis XIII., Anne of Austria, Richelieu, Mazarin, and most of the courtiers of the period, fully as accurately drawn as in the history of M. Anquetil.

But, as is well known, what strikes the poet's capricious mind is not always what affects the majority of his readers. Now, while admiring, as others doubtless will, the details we have pointed out, the thing which attracted our attention most strongly is something to which no one before us had given the least thought.

D'Artagnan relates that on his first visit to M. de Tréville, captain of the king's musketeers, he met in his ante-chamber three young men serving in the illustrious corps of which he was soliciting the honor of becoming a member, and who bore the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

We acknowledge these three foreign names struck us, and it immediately occurred to us that they were only pseudonyms by means of which D'Artagnan had disguised names, perhaps illustrious, if indeed the bearers of these borrowed names had not chosen them themselves on the day when, from caprice, discontent, or lack of fortune, they had donned the musketeer's simple uniform.

From that moment we had no rest until we had found in works of that day some trace of these extraordinary names, which had so strongly awakened our curiosity.

The catalogue alone of the books we read with this object in view would fill a whole chapter. This would be very instructive perhaps, but certainly would afford our readers very little amusement. So we will be satisfied to tell them that at the moment when, discouraged by so many fruitless investigations, we were about to abandon our search, we at length found, under the guidance of the counsels of our illustrious and learned friend, Paulin Paris, a folio manuscript catalogued under the number 4,772 or 4,773 (we no longer recollect which), having for title:

"Memoir of the Comte de La Fère, touching certain Events which occurred in France toward the End of the Reign of King Louis XIII., and the Beginning of the Reign of King Louis XIV."

How great our joy was may be easily imagined, when on running over this manuscript, our last hope, we found on the twentieth page the name of Athos, on the twenty-seventh the name of Porthos, and on the thirty-first the name of Aramis.

The discovery of a completely unknown manuscript at a period when the science of history is carried to such a high degree seemed to us almost miraculous. We hastened, therefore, to obtain permission to print it, with the purpose of presenting ourselves some day with the baggage of others at the doors of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, unless we should succeed — a very probable thing, by the bye — in gaining admission to the Académie Française with our own baggage. This permission, we feel bound to say, was graciously granted; a fact we state here in order to give a public contradiction to the slanderers who claim that we live under a government rather too little inclined to be indulgent to men of letters.

Now, we offer to-day the first part of this precious manuscript to our readers, restoring to it the title which suits it, and agreeing that if this first part should obtain (as we do not at all doubt) the success it deserves, to publish the second immediately.

In the meanwhile, as the godfather is a second father, we beg the reader to hold us, and not the Comte de La Fère, responsible for the pleasure or the *ennui* he may experience.

This being understood, let us proceed with our history.

THE

THREE MUSKETEERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE GIFTS OF M. D'ARTAGNAN THE ELDER.

On the first Monday of the month of April, 1625, the bourg of Meung, in which the author of the "Romance of the Rose" was born, appeared to be in as complete a state of revolution as if the Huguenots had come to make a second Rochelle of it. Many citizens, seeing the women flying towards the Main street, hearing the children crying at the open doors, hastened to don the cuirass, and, supporting their somewhat uncertain courage with a musket or a partisan, directed their steps towards the hostelry of the Jolly Miller, before which was gathered a compact and rapidly increasing group, vociferous and full of curiosity.

In those times panics were common, and but few days passed without some city or other recording in its archives an event of this kind. There were nobles, who made war against one another; there was the king, who made war against the cardinal; there was the Spaniard, who made war against the king. Then, in addition to these, concealed or public, secret or open wars, there were robbers, mendicants, Huguenots, wolves, and lackeys, who made war upon everybody. The citizens were always in arms against thieves, wolves, or lackeys — often against nobles or Huguenots — sometimes against the king — but never against the cardinal or Spain. The result, therefore, of this habit was, that on the aforesaid first Monday of the month of April, 1625, the citizens, hearing the clamor, and seeing neither the red and yellow standard, nor the livery of the Duc de Richelieu, rushed toward the hostelry of the Jolly Miller.

On reaching there, the cause of this hubbub was apparent to all.

A young man — let us outline his portrait with a stroke of the pen — imagine Don Quixote at eighteen; Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses; Don Quixote clothed in a woollen doublet, the blue color of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure; face long and brown; high cheek-bones, indicating craftiness; the maxillary muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which a Gascon may always be detected, even without his cap — and our young man wore a cap ornamented with a kind of feather; his eye open and intelligent; his nose hooked, but finely chiselled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey, had it not been for the long sword, which, dangling from a leathern baldric, hit against its owner's calves as he walked, and against his steed's rough side when he was on horseback.

For our young man had a steed, which was the observed of all observers. It was a Béarn pony, from twelve to fourteen years old, with yellow coat, not a hair in his tail, but not without wind-galls on his legs, which, though going with his head lower than his knees, rendering a martingale quite unnecessary, contrived, nevertheless, to perform his eight leagues a day. Unfortunately, the qualities of this horse were so well concealed under his strangely colored hide and his unaccountable gait, that at a time when everybody was a connoisseur in horseflesh, the appearance of the said pony at Meung, which place he had entered about a quarter of an hour before, by the gate of Beaugency, produced an unfavorable feeling that extended to his master.

And this feeling was the more painful to young D'Artagnan — for so was the Don Quixote of this second Rosinante named — because he was conscious himself of the ridiculous appearance he made on such a steed, good horseman as he was. He had sighed deeply, therefore, when accepting the gift of the pony from M. d'Artagnan the elder. He was not ignorant that such a beast was worth at least twenty pounds; and the words which accompanied the gift were above all price.

"My son," said the old Gascon nobleman, in that pure Béarn *patois* of which Henry IV. was never able to rid himself, "my son, this horse was born in your father's house, about thirteen years ago, and has remained in it ever since, which ought to make you love it. Never sell it — allow it to die tranquilly and honorably of old age; and if you make a campaign with

it, take as much care of it as you would of an old servant. At court, provided you ever have the honor to go there," continued M. d'Artagnan the elder, "an honor to which, remember, your ancient nobility gives you the right, sustain worthily your name of *gentleman*, which has been worthily borne by your ancestors for more than five hundred years, both for your own sake and for those who belong to you. By the latter I mean your relatives and friends. Endure nothing from any one except the cardinal and the king. It is by his courage, you understand, by his courage alone, that a gentleman makes his way to-day. Whoever trembles for a second perhaps allows the bait to escape, which, during that exact second, fortune held out to him. You are young; you ought to be brave for two reasons — the first is that you are a Gascon, and the second is that you are my son. Never fear quarrels, but seek adventures. I have taught you how to handle a sword; you have sinews of iron, a wrist of steel; fight on all occasions; fight the more because duels are forbidden, since, consequently, there is twice as much courage in fighting. I have nothing to give you, my son, but fifteen crowns, my horse, and the counsels you have just heard. Your mother will add to them a receipt for a certain balsam, which she got from a gipsy, and which has the miraculous virtue of curing all wounds that do not reach the heart. Take advantage of all, and live happily and long. I have but one more word to add, and that is to propose an example to you — not mine, for I myself have never appeared at court, and have only taken part in religious wars as a volunteer; I speak of M. de Tréville, who was formerly my neighbor, and who had the honor to be as a child the playfellow of our king, Louis XIII., whom God preserve! Sometimes their play degenerated into battles, and in these battles the king was not always the stronger. The blows which he received from him caused him to entertain great esteem and friendship for M. de Tréville. Afterwards, M. de Tréville fought with others: during his first journey to Paris, five times; from the death of the late king to the majority of the young one, without reckoning wars and sieges, seven times; and from that majority up to the present day, a hundred times perhaps! So that in spite of edicts, ordinances, and decrees, behold him captain of the musketeers — that is to say, leader of a legion of Cæsars, whom the king holds in great esteem, and whom the cardinal dreads — he who dreads little, as every one knows. Moreover, M. de Tréville gains ten thousand crowns a year; he is, therefore, a very great

noble. He began as you begin; go to him with this letter, and make him your model, in order that you may do as he has done."

Upon which M. d'Artagnan the elder girded his own sword round his son, kissed him tenderly on both cheeks, and gave him his blessing.

On leaving the paternal chamber, the young man found his mother, who was waiting for him with the famous recipe, the use of which would be so frequently necessitated by the counsels we have just related. The farewells were on this side longer and more tender than they had been on the other; not that M. d'Artagnan did not love his son, who was his only offspring, but M. d'Artagnan was a man, and he would have considered it unworthy of a man to give way to his feelings; whereas Madame d'Artagnan was a woman, and, moreover, a mother. She wept profusely, and, let us tell it in praise of M. d'Artagnan the younger, notwithstanding the efforts he made to be as firm as a future musketeer ought to be, nature prevailed, and he shed many tears, half of which he had great difficulty in concealing.

The same day, the young man set forward on his journey, provided with the three paternal gifts, which consisted, as we have said, of fifteen crowns, the horse, and the letter for M. de Tréville, the counsels, as may be supposed, being thrown into the bargain.

With such a *vade mecum* D'Artagnan was, morally and physically, an exact copy of the hero of Cervantes, to whom we so happily compared him, when our duty as an historian placed us under the necessity of sketching his portrait. Don Quixote took windmills for giants, and sheep for armies; D'Artagnan took every smile for an insult, and every look as a provocation, the result of which was that from Tarbes to Meung his fist was constantly doubled, and his hand, on the average, ten times a day on the hilt of his sword; and yet the fist did not descend upon any jaw, nor did the sword issue from its scabbard. It was not that the sight of the wretched pony did not excite numerous smiles on the countenances of passers-by; but as against the side of this pony rattled a sword of respectable length, and as over this sword gleamed an eye rather ferocious than haughty, these said passers-by repressed their hilarity, or, if hilarity prevailed over prudence, they endeavored to laugh only on one side, like the masks of the ancients. D'Artagnan, then, remained majestic and intact in his susceptibility till he came to this unlucky city of Meung.

But there, as he was alighting from his horse at the gate of the Jolly Miller, without any one, host, waiter, or ostler, coming to hold his stirrup or take his horse, D'Artagnan spied, through an open window on the ground floor, a man of fine figure and lofty bearing, but of rather grim countenance, talking with two persons who appeared to listen to him most respectfully. D'Artagnan fancied, as was natural for him to do, that he himself must be the object of their conversation, and listened. This time D'Artagnan was only in part mistaken: he himself was not the subject of remark, but his horse was. The gentleman appeared to be enumerating all his qualities to his auditors, and, as I have said, the auditors seeming to have great deference for the narrator, they every moment burst into fits of laughter. Now, as a half smile was sufficient to awaken the irascibility of the young man, the effect produced upon him by this vociferous mirth may be easily imagined.

Nevertheless, D'Artagnan was desirous of examining the appearance of this impertinent personage who was laughing at him. He fixed his haughty eye upon the stranger, and perceived a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, with black and piercing eyes, a pale complexion, a strongly marked nose, and a black and well-shaped moustache. He was dressed in a doublet and hose of violet color, with aiguillettes of the same, without any other ornaments than the customary slashes through which the shirt appeared. This doublet and hose, though new, looked creased, as garments do which have been long packed in a travelling-bag. D'Artagnan noticed all this with the rapidity of a most minute observer, and, doubtless, from an instinctive feeling that this unknown was destined to have a great influence over his future life.

Now, as at the moment in which D'Artagnan fixed his eyes upon the man in the violet doublet, the man made one of his most knowing and profound remarks respecting the Béarnese pony, his two auditors burst out laughing, and he himself, though contrary to his custom, suffered a pale smile (if I may be allowed to use such an expression) to stray over his countenance. This time there could be no doubt, D'Artagnan was really insulted. Full then of this conviction, he pulled his cap down over his eyes, and endeavoring to copy some of the court airs he had picked up in Gascony among young travelling nobles, he advanced, with one hand on the hilt of his sword and the other resting on his hip. Unfortunately, as he advanced, his anger increased at every step, and, instead of

the proper and lofty speech he had prepared as a prelude to his challenge, he found nothing at the tip of his tongue but a gross personality, which he accompanied with a furious gesture.

"I say, sir, you, sir, who are hiding yourself behind that shutter!—yes, you, sir, tell me what you are laughing at, and we will laugh together."

The man withdrew his eyes slowly from the nag to his rider, as if he required some time to ascertain whether it could be to him that such strange reproaches were addressed; then, when he could no longer entertain any doubt of the matter, his eyebrows bent slightly, and, after quite a long pause, with an accent of irony and insolence impossible to be described, he replied to D'Artagnan:

"I was not speaking to you, sir!"

"But I am speaking to you!" replied the young man, exasperated by this mixture of insolence and good manners, of politeness and scorn.

The unknown looked at him for a moment longer with his faint smile, and, retiring from the window, came out of the hostelry with a slow step, and placed himself before the horse within two paces of D'Artagnan. His quiet manner and the ironical expression of his countenance redoubled the mirth of those with whom he had been talking, and who still remained at the window.

D'Artagnan, seeing him approach, drew his sword a foot out of the scabbard.

"This horse is decidedly, or rather has been in his youth, a buttercup," resumed the unknown, continuing the remarks he had begun, and addressing himself to his auditors at the window, without seeming in any way to notice the exasperation of D'Artagnan, who, however, remained stiffly standing between them. "It is a color very well known in botany, but till the present time very rare among horses."

"There are people who laugh at a horse that would not dare to laugh at the master of it," cried furiously the emulator of Tréville.

"I do not often laugh, sir," replied the unknown, "as you may perceive by the expression of my face; but, nevertheless, I insist upon retaining the privilege of laughing when I please."

"And I," cried D'Artagnan, "will allow no man to laugh when it displeases me!"

"Indeed, sir," continued the unknown, more quietly than

ever. "Well! that is perfectly right!" and, turning on his heel, was about to reënter the hostelry by the front gate, under which D'Artagnan, as he came up, had observed a saddled horse standing.

But D'Artagnan was not the person thus to allow a man to escape him, who had once had the insolence to laugh at him. He drew his sword entirely from the scabbard, and followed him, crying:

"Turn, turn, Master Joker, lest I strike you from behind!"

"Strike me!" said the other, turning sharply round and surveying the young man with as much astonishment as contempt. "Come, come, my good fellow, you must be mad!" Then, in a suppressed tone, as if speaking to himself: "This is annoying," continued he. "What a godsend this would be for his Majesty, who is seeking everywhere for bravoes to recruit his musketeers!"

He had scarcely finished, when D'Artagnan made such a furious lunge at him that if he had not sprung nimbly backward, it is probable that he would have jested for the last time. The unknown then, perceiving that the matter was going beyond a joke, drew his sword, saluted his adversary, and gravely placed himself on guard. But at the same moment his two auditors, accompanied by the host, fell upon D'Artagnan with sticks, shovels, and tongs. This caused so rapid and complete a diversion to the attack that D'Artagnan's adversary, while the latter was turning round to face this shower of blows, sheathed his sword with the same precision as before, and from an actor, which he had nearly been, became a spectator of the fight, a rôle in which he acquitted himself with his usual impassibility, muttering, nevertheless:

"A plague upon these Gascons! Put him on his yellow horse again, and let him be gone!"

"Not before I have killed you, poltroon!" cried D'Artagnan, showing the best front possible, and never falling back one step before his three assailants, who continued to shower their blows upon him.

"Another gasconade!" murmured the gentleman. "By my honor, these Gascons are incorrigible! Keep up the dance, then, since he will have it so. When he is tired, he will say that he has enough of it."

But the unknown did not yet know the headstrong personage he had to deal with; D'Artagnan was not the man ever to cry for quarter. The fight was, therefore, prolonged for some seconds; but at length D'Artagnan, worn out, let fall his

sword, which was struck from his hand by the blow of a stick and broken in two pieces. Another blow full upon his forehead, at the same moment, brought him to the ground, covered with blood and almost fainting.

It was at this period that people came flocking to the scene of action from all sides. The host, fearful of consequences, with the help of his servants carried the wounded man into the kitchen, where some trifling attention was bestowed upon him.

As to the gentleman, he resumed his place at the window, and surveyed all that crowd with a certain air of impatience, evidently much annoyed by their persistence in remaining there.

"Well, how is it with this madman?" exclaimed he, turning round as the opening door announced the entrance of the host, who came to inquire whether he was hurt.

"Your Excellency is safe and sound?" asked the host.

"Oh, yes! perfectly safe and sound, my good host, and I now wish to know what has become of our young man."

"He is better," said the host; "he fainted quite away."

"Indeed!" said the gentleman.

"But before he fainted, he collected all his strength to challenge you, and to defy you while challenging you."

"Why, this fellow must be the devil in person!" cried the unknown.

"Oh, no, your Excellency!" replied the host with a grin of contempt; "he is not the devil, for during his fainting we rummaged his valise, and found nothing but a clean shirt and twelve crowns, which, however, did not prevent his saying, as he was fainting, that if such a thing had happened in Paris you should have instantly repented of it, while here you will only repent of it later on."

"Then," said the unknown, coldly, "he must be some prince of the blood in disguise."

"I have told you this, good sir," resumed the host, "in order that you may be on your guard."

"Did he name no one in his passion?"

"Yes! he struck his pocket and said: 'We shall see what M. de Tréville will think of this insult offered to his *protégé*.'"

"M. de Tréville?" said the unknown, becoming attentive; "he struck his pocket while pronouncing the name of M. de Tréville? Now, my dear host! while your young man was unconscious you did not fail, I am quite sure, to ascertain what that pocket contained. What was there in it?"

"A letter addressed to M. de Tréville, captain of the musketeers."

"Indeed!"

"Just as I have the honor to tell your Excellency."

The host, who was not endowed with great perspicacity, did not notice at all the expression which his words called up in the countenance of the unknown. The latter arose from the window upon the sill of which he had been leaning his elbow, and knitted his brows like a man suddenly disturbed.

"The devil!" muttered he, between his teeth. "Can Tréville have set this Gascon upon me? He is very young, but a sword-thrust is a sword-thrust, whatever be the age of him who gives it, and a youth is less to be suspected than an older man. A weak obstacle is sometimes sufficient to overthrow a great design."

And the unknown fell into a reverie which lasted some minutes.

"Host," said he, "could you not contrive to get rid of this frantic boy for me? In conscience, I cannot kill him; and yet," added he, with a coldly menacing expression, "and yet he annoys me. Where is he?"

"In my wife's chamber, where they are dressing his wounds, on the first floor."

"His things and his bag are with him? Has he taken off his doublet?"

"On the contrary, everything is down in the kitchen. But if he annoys you, this crazy young fool—"

"To be sure he does. He causes a disturbance in your hostelry, which respectable people cannot put up with. Go, make out my bill, and call my servant."

"What, sir! do you mean to leave us already?"

"You knew I was going, as I ordered you to get my horse saddled. Have they not obeyed?"

"Yes, sir; and as your Excellency may have observed, your horse is in the great gateway, ready saddled for your departure."

"That is well; do as I have directed you, then."

"What the devil!" said the host to himself; "can he be afraid of this boy?" But an imperious glance from the unknown stopped him short, he bowed humbly and retired.

"Milady [1] must see nothing of this fellow," continued the

[1] We are well aware that this term *milady* is only properly used when followed by a family name. But we find it thus in the manuscript, and we do not choose to take upon ourselves to alter it.

stranger. "She will soon pass by — she is already late. I had better get on horseback, and go and meet her. I should like, however, to know what this letter addressed to Tréville contains!"

And the unknown, muttering to himself, directed his steps towards the kitchen.

In the meantime, the host, who entertained no doubt that it was the presence of the young man which was driving the unknown from his hostelry, had gone up to his wife's chamber, and found D'Artagnan entirely returned to consciousness. Giving him to understand that the police could deal with him pretty severely for having sought a quarrel with a great lord (for, in the opinion of the host, the unknown could be nothing less than a great lord), he insisted that, notwithstanding his weakness, he should get up and depart as quickly as possible. D'Artagnan, half stupefied, without his doublet, and with his head all swathed with bandages, arose then, and urged on by the host, began to descend the stairs; but on arriving at the kitchen, the first thing he saw was his antagonist, who stood quietly talking beside the step of a heavy carriage drawn by two large Norman horses.

His interlocutor, whose head appeared through the carriage window, was a woman of from twenty to two-and-twenty years of age. We have already observed with what rapidity D'Artagnan took in every feature of a face. He perceived then, at a glance, that this woman was young and beautiful; and her style of beauty struck him the more forcibly on account of its being totally different from that of the southern countries in which D'Artagnan had hitherto resided. She was pale and fair, with long curls falling in profusion over her shoulders; had large languishing blue eyes, rosy lips, and hands of alabaster. She was talking with great animation with the unknown.

"His Eminence, then, orders me —" said the lady.

"To return instantly to England, and to inform him immediately should the duke leave London."

"And my other instructions?" asked the fair traveller.

"They are contained in this box, which you will not open until you are on the other side of the Channel"

"Very well; and you, what are you going to do?"

"I, oh! I shall return to Paris."

"What, without chastising this insolent boy?" asked the lady.

The unknown was about to reply, but at the moment he

opened his mouth, D'Artagnan, who had heard all, rushed forward through the open door.

"This insolent boy chastises others," cried he, "and I sincerely hope that he whom he means to chastise will not escape him as he did before."

"Will not escape him?" replied the unknown, knitting his brow.

"No, before a woman you would not dare to fly, I presume?"

"Remember," cried milady, seeing the unknown lay his hand on his sword, "remember that the least delay may ruin everything."

"True," cried the gentleman; "begone, then, your way and I will go mine." And bowing to the lady, he sprang into his saddle, her coachman at the same time applying his whip vigorously to his horses. The two interlocutors thus separated, taking opposite directions, at full gallop.

"Your reckoning! your reckoning!" vociferated the host, whose respect for the traveller was changed into profound contempt, on seeing him depart without settling his bill.

"Pay him, booby!" cried the unknown to his servant, without checking the speed of his horse; and the man, after throwing two or three pieces of silver at the foot of mine host, galloped after his master.

"Base coward! false nobleman!" cried D'Artagnan, springing forward, in his turn, after the servant. But his wound had rendered him too weak to support such an exertion. Scarcely had he gone ten steps when his ears began to tingle, a faintness seized him, a cloud of blood passed over his eyes, and he fell in the middle of the street, crying still:

"Coward! coward! coward!"

"He is a coward indeed," grumbled the host, drawing near to D'Artagnan, and endeavoring by this little flattery to make up matters with the young man, as the heron of the fable did with the snail he had despised the evening before.

"Yes, a base coward," murmured D'Artagnan; "but she, she was very beautiful."

"What she?" demanded the host.

"Milady," faltered D'Artagnan, and fainted the second time.

"Ah! it's all one," said the host; "I have lost two customers, but this one remains, of whom I am pretty certain for some days to come; and that will be eleven crowns gained, at all events."

We must remember that eleven crowns was just the amount which remained in D'Artagnan's purse.

The host had reckoned upon eleven days of confinement at a crown a day, but he had reckoned without his guest. On the following morning, at five o'clock, D'Artagnan arose, and descending to the kitchen without help, asked, among other ingredients the list of which has not come down to us, for some oil, some wine, and some rosemary, and with his mother's receipt in his hand, composed a balsam with which he anointed his numerous wounds, replacing his bandages himself, and positively refusing the assistance of any doctor. Thanks, no doubt, to the efficacy of the gipsy's balsam, and perhaps, also, thanks to the absence of any doctor, D'Artagnan walked about that same evening, and was almost cured by the morrow.

But when the time of settlement came, the rosemary, the oil, and the wine were the only expenses the master had incurred on his own account, as he had preserved a strict abstinence; while on the contrary, the yellow horse, by the account of the hostler, had eaten at least three times as much as a horse of his size could reasonably be supposed to have done. D'Artagnan found nothing in his pocket but his little worn velvet purse with the eleven crowns it contained; as to the letter addressed to M. de Tréville, it had disappeared.

The young man commenced his search for the letter with the greatest patience, turning out his various pockets twenty times, rummaging and rummaging again in his valise, and opening and closing his purse; but when he had reached the conclusion that the letter was not to be found, he flew, for the third time, into such a rage that it came near costing him a fresh consumption of wine, oil, and rosemary; for upon seeing this hot-headed youth become exasperated and threaten to destroy everything in the establishment if his letter were not found, the host seized a spit, his wife a broom-handle, and the servants the same sticks they had used the evening before.

"My letter of recommendation!" cried D'Artagnan; "my letter of recommendation! or, by God's blood, I will spit you all like so many ortolans!"

Unfortunately there was one circumstance which created a powerful obstacle to the accomplishment of this threat; which was, as we have related, that his sword had been in the first conflict broken in two, a fact he had wholly forgotten. The consequence was that when D'Artagnan went to draw his sword in earnest, he found himself armed merely with a stump of a sword of about eight or ten inches in length, which the host had carefully placed in the scabbard. As to the rest of the

blade, the master had slyly put that one side to make for himself a larding-pin.

But this loss would probably not have stopped our fiery young man if the host had not reflected that the demand which his guest made was perfectly just.

"But after all," said he, lowering the point of his spit, "where is that letter?"

"Yes, where is that letter?" cried D'Artagnan. "In the first place, I warn you that the letter is for M. de Tréville, and it must be found; if it be not quickly found, he will know how to have it found, I will answer for it!"

This threat completed the intimidation of the host. After the king and the cardinal, M. de Tréville was the man whose name was perhaps most frequently repeated by the military, and even by the citizens. There was, to be sure, Father Joseph, but his name was never pronounced except in a subdued voice, such was the terror inspired by his Gray Eminence, as the cardinal's confidant was called.

Throwing down his spit then, and ordering his wife to do the same with her broom-handle, and the servants with their sticks, he was the first to begin an earnest search for the lost letter.

"Does the letter contain anything valuable?" demanded the host, after a few minutes of useless investigation.

"Zounds! I think it does, indeed," cried the Gascon, who reckoned upon this letter for making his way at court; "it contained my fortune!"

"Bills upon Spain?" asked the disturbed host.

"Bills upon his Majesty's private treasury," answered D'Artagnan, who, reckoning upon entering into the king's service in consequence of this recommendation, thought he could make this somewhat hazardous reply without telling a falsehood.

"The devil!" cried the host, at his wit's end.

"But it's of no importance," continued D'Artagnan, with the assurance of his nation; "it's of no importance, the money is nothing, — that letter was everything; I would rather have lost a thousand pistoles than have lost it." He would not have risked more if he had said twenty thousand; but a certain youthful modesty restrained him.

A ray of light all at once broke upon the mind of the host, who was uttering maledictions upon finding nothing.

"That letter is not lost!" cried he.

"What!" said D'Artagnan.

"No; it has been stolen from you."

"Stolen! by whom?"

"By the gentleman who was here yesterday. He came down into the kitchen, where your doublet was. He remained there some time alone. I would lay a wager he has stolen it."

"Do you think so?" answered D'Artagnan, but little convinced, as he knew better than any one else how entirely personal the value of this letter was, and saw nothing in it likely to tempt the cupidity of any one. The fact was that none of the servants, none of the travellers present, could have gained anything by becoming possessed of this paper.

"Do you say," resumed D'Artagnan, "that you suspect that impertinent gentleman?"

"I tell you I am sure of it," continued the host; "when I informed him that your lordship was the *protégé* of M. de Tréville, and that you even had a letter for that illustrious nobleman, he appeared to be very much disturbed, and asked me where that letter was, and immediately came down into the kitchen, where he knew your doublet was."

"Then he is the thief," replied D'Artagnan. "I will complain to M. de Tréville, and M. de Tréville will complain to the king." He then drew two crowns majestically from his purse, gave them to the host, who accompanied him cap in hand to the gate, remounted his yellow horse, which bore him without any further accident to the gate of St. Antoine at Paris, where his owner sold him for three crowns, which was a very good price, considering that D'Artagnan had ridden him hard on the last stretch. The dealer to whom D'Artagnan sold him for the said nine pounds explained to the young man that he only gave that enormous sum for him on account of the originality of his color.

So D'Artagnan entered Paris on foot, carrying his little packet under his arm, and wandered around till he found an apartment to be let on terms suited to the scantiness of his means. This chamber was a sort of garret, situated in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, near the Luxembourg.

As soon as the earnest-money was paid, D'Artagnan took possession of his lodging, and passed the remainder of the day in sewing on to his doublet and hose some ornamental braiding which his mother had taken off from an almost new doublet of the elder M. d'Artagnan, and which she had given to him secretly. Then he went to the Quai de la Ferraille, to have a new blade put to his sword, and came back to the Louvre, and inquired of the first musketeer he met the

situation of the hôtel of M. de Tréville, which proved to be in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, in the immediate vicinity of the chamber hired by D'Artagnan; a circumstance which appeared to him to be a happy augury for the outcome of his journey.

After which, satisfied with the way in which he had conducted himself at Meung, without remorse for the past, confident in the present, and full of hope for the future, he retired to bed, and slept the sleep of the brave.

This sleep, rustic as it was, brought him to nine o'clock in the morning, at which hour he rose in order to repair to the residence of the famous M. de Tréville, the third personage in the kingdom, according to the estimation of his father.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANTE-CHAMBER OF M. DE TRÉVILLE.

M. DE TROISVILLE, as his family was still called in Gascony, or M. de Tréville, as he had ended by styling himself in Paris, had really commenced life as D'Artagnan now did, that is to say, without a sou in his pocket, but with a fund of courage, shrewdness, and intelligence which makes the poorest Gascon gentleman often derive more in his imagination from the paternal inheritance than the richest nobleman of Perigord or Berry receives in reality. His insolent bravery, his still more insolent success at a time when blows poured down like hail, had borne him to the top of that ladder called court favor, which he had climbed four rounds at a time.

He was the friend of the king, who honored highly, as every one knows, the memory of his father, Henry IV. The father of M. de Tréville had served him so faithfully in his wars against the League that, for want of ready money, — a thing to which the Béarnais was accustomed all his life, and who constantly paid his debts with the only thing which he never needed to borrow, namely, with wit, — for want of money, we repeat, he authorized him, after the reduction of Paris, to assume for his arms a golden lion passant upon gules, with the motto *Fidelis et fortis*. This was a great matter in the way of honor, but very little in the way of wealth; so that when the illustrious companion of the great Henry died, the only inheritance he was able to leave his son was his sword and his motto. Thanks to this double gift and the spot-

less name that accompanied it, M. de Tréville was admitted into the household of the young prince, where he made such good use of his sword, and was so faithful to his motto, that Louis XIII., one of the good swordsmen of his kingdom, was accustomed to say that, if he had a friend who was about to fight, he would advise him to choose as a second himself first and Tréville next, or even perhaps Tréville first.

Thus Louis XIII. had a real liking for Tréville, a royal liking, a selfish liking, it is true, but which was still a liking. At that unhappy period it was an important consideration to be surrounded by such men as De Tréville. Many might take for their motto the epithet of *strong*, which formed the second part of his device, but very few gentlemen could lay claim to the *faithful*, which constituted the first. Tréville was one of the latter; his was one of those rare organizations endowed with an obedient intelligence like that of the dog, with a blind valor, a quick eye, and a prompt hand, to whom sight appeared only to be given to see if the king were dissatisfied with any one, and the hand to strike the one who displeased him, whether a Besme, a Maurevers, a Poltrot de Méré, or a Vitry. In short, up to this period, nothing had been wanting to De Tréville but opportunity; but he was ever on the watch for it, and he promised himself that he would never fail to seize it by its three hairs whenever it came within reach of his hand. Louis XIII. then made De Tréville the captain of his musketeers, who were to Louis XIII., in devotedness, or rather in fanaticism, what his Ordinaries had been to Henry III., and his Scotch Guard to Louis XI.

On his part, and in this respect, the cardinal was not behindhand with the king. When he saw the formidable and chosen body by which Louis XIII. surrounded himself, this second, or rather this first, king of France became desirous that he too should have his guard. He had his musketeers then, as Louis XIII. had his; and these two powerful rivals vied with each other in procuring the most celebrated swordsmen, not only from all the provinces of France, but also from all foreign states. It was not uncommon for Richelieu and Louis XIII. to discuss, over their evening game of chess, the merits of their servants. Each boasted of the bearing and the courage of his own, and while exclaiming loudly against duels and broils, they excited them secretly to quarrel, deriving an immoderate satisfaction or a profound regret from the success or defeat of their own combatants. At least, so say the memoirs of a man

who was concerned in some few of these defeats and in many of these victories.

Tréville had seized on the weak side of his master, and it was to this shrewdness that he owed the long and constant favor of a king who has not left behind him the reputation of having been very faithful in his friendships. He paraded his musketeers before the cardinal Armand Duplessis with an insolent air, which made the gray moustache of his Eminence bristle with ire. Tréville was a master of the military science of that period, when he who did not live at the expense of the enemy lived at the expense of his compatriots; his soldiers formed a legion of devil-may-care fellows, perfectly undisciplined as regarded every one but himself.

Loose, tipsy, gashed, the king's musketeers, or rather M. de Tréville's, spread themselves about in the saloons, in the public walks, and the public sports, shouting, twirling their moustaches, clanking their swords, and taking great pleasure in bustling against the guards of the cardinal whenever they could fall in with them; then drawing their swords in the open streets, with a thousand jests; sometimes killed, but sure in that case to be both wept and avenged; often killing others, but then certain of not rotting in prison, M. de Tréville being there to claim them. And so M. de Tréville was praised in all keys by these men, who absolutely adored him, and who, ruffians as they were, trembled before him like scholars before their master, obedient to his least word, and ready to sacrifice themselves to wipe out the least insult.

M. de Tréville had employed this powerful machine for the king in the first place, and the friends of the king — and then for himself and his own friends. Besides, in none of the memoirs of this period, which has left so many memoirs, is this worthy gentleman accused even by his enemies, — and he had many such among men of the pen, as well as among men of the sword, — in no instance. we say, was this worthy gentleman accused of being paid for the coöperation of his minions. Endowed with a rare genius for intrigue, which rendered him the equal of the ablest intriguers, he remained an honorable man. And further, in spite of sword-thrusts which weaken, and painful exercises which fatigue, he had become one of the most gallant frequenters of *salons*, one of the most exquisite dandies, one of the most refined purveyors of flattery of the times; De Tréville's love affairs were talked about as those of M. de Bassompierre had been talked of twenty years before, and that was not saying a little. The captain of the

musketeers, then, was admired, feared, and loved, and this constitutes the apogee of human fortunes.

Louis XIV. absorbed all the smaller stars of his court in his own vast radiance; but his father, a sun *pluribus impar*, left his personal splendor for each of his favorites, his individual value for each of his courtiers. In addition to the levees of the king and the cardinal, there might be reckoned in Paris at that time more than two hundred smaller levees, more or less sought after. Among these two hundred levees, that of De Tréville was one of the most thronged.

The court of his hôtel, situated in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, resembled a camp as early as six o'clock in the morning in summer and eight o'clock in winter. From fifty to sixty musketeers, who appeared to relieve each other there, in order always to present an imposing number, paraded constantly about, armed to the teeth and ready for anything. On one of those immense staircases, upon whose space modern civilization would build a whole house, ascended and descended the solicitors of Paris, who were in search of favors of any kind: gentlemen from the provinces anxious to be enrolled, and servants in all sorts of liveries, bringing messages from their masters to M. de Tréville. In the ante-chamber, upon long circular benches, reposed the elect; that is to say, those who were called. In this apartment a continued buzzing prevailed from morning till night, while M. de Tréville, in his office contiguous to this ante-chamber, received visits, listened to complaints, gave his orders, and, like the king in his balcony at the Louvre, had only to place himself at the window to review both men and arms.

The day on which D'Artagnan presented himself, the assemblage was imposing, particularly for a provincial just arriving from his province. It is true that this provincial was a Gascon, and that, particularly at this period, the compatriots of D'Artagnan had the reputation of not being easily intimidated. When he had once passed the massive door, covered with long square-headed nails, he fell into the midst of a troop of military, who were passing each other in the court, calling out, quarrelling, and playing tricks one with another. To make way through these turbulent and conflicting waves, it was necessary to be an officer, a great noble, or a pretty woman.

It was, then, into the midst of this tumult and disorder that our young man advanced with a beating heart. Holding his long rapier close to his lanky leg, and keeping one hand on the edge of his cap, he smiled with the embarrassment of a

provincial who affects confidence. When he had passed one group he began to breathe more freely; but he could not help observing that they turned round to look at him, and, for the first time in his life, D'Artagnan, who had till that day entertained a very good opinion of himself, felt that he was the object of ridicule.

When he arrived at the staircase it was still worse; there were four musketeers on the botton steps amusing themselves with the following exercise, while ten or twelve of their comrades on the landing-place awaited their turn in the game.

One of them, placed upon the top stair, naked sword in hand, prevented, or at least endeavored to prevent, the three others from going up.

These three others fenced against him with their agile swords, which D'Artagnan at first took for foils, and believed to be buttoned; but he soon perceived, by certain scratches, that every weapon was pointed and well sharpened, and that at each of these scratches, not only the spectators, but even the actors themselves, laughed like so many madmen.

He who at that moment occupied the upper step kept his adversaries in check admirably. A circle was formed around them; the conditions required that at every thrust the person hit should quit the game, losing his turn to the advantage of the person who had hit him. In five minutes three were slightly wounded, one on the wrist, another on the chin, and the third on the ear, by the defender of the stair, who himself remained intact: a piece of skill which was worth to him, according to the rules of the game, three additional turns.

However difficult it might be, or rather as he pretended it was, to astonish our young traveller, this pastime really astonished him. He had seen in his province — that land in which heads become so easily heated — a few of the preliminaries of duels, but the gasconades of these four fencers appeared to him the greatest he had ever heard, even in Gascony. He believed himself transported into that famous country of giants into which Gulliver has since gone and was so frightened; and yet he had not gained the goal, for there were still the landing-place and the ante-chamber.

On the landing they were no longer fighting, but amused themselves with stories about women, and in the ante-chamber with stories about the court. On the landing, D'Artagnan blushed; in the ante-chamber, he trembled. His warm and fickle imagination, which in Gascony had rendered him formidable to young chambermaids, and even sometimes to their

mistresses, had never dreamed, even in moments of delirium, of half the amorous wonders, or a quarter of the feats of gallantry, which were here set forth, accompanied by names the best known, and with details the least delicate. But if his morals were shocked on the landing, his respect for the cardinal was scandalized in the ante-chamber. There, to his great astonishment, D'Artagnan heard the policy which made all Europe tremble criticised aloud and openly, as well as the private life of the cardinal, for trying to pry into which so many great nobles had been punished. That great man, who was so revered by D'Artagnan the elder, served as an object of ridicule to M. de Tréville's musketeers, who cracked their jokes upon his bandy legs and his hump-back; some sang ballads upon Madame d'Aiguillon, his mistress, and Madame de Combalet, his niece, while others formed parties and plans to annoy the pages and guards of the cardinal duke — all of which appeared to D'Artagnan monstrous impossibilities.

Nevertheless, when the name of the king was now and then uttered unexpectedly amidst all these cardinal jokes, a sort of gag seemed to close for a moment all these jeering mouths; they looked hesitatingly around them, and seemed to fear lest the walls of M. de Tréville's office should have ears; but a fresh allusion soon brought back the conversation to his Eminence, and then the laughter burst out anew and all of his actions were dragged into full light.

"Certes, these fellows will all be either embastiled or hung," thought the terrified D'Artagnan, "and I, no doubt, with them; for from the moment I have either listened to or heard them, I shall be held to be an accomplice. What would my good father say, who so strongly pointed out to me the respect due to the cardinal, if he knew I was in the society of such pagans?"

We have no need, therefore, to say that D'Artagnan did not venture to join in the conversation; only he looked with all his eyes and listened with all his ears, stretching his five senses so as to lose nothing; and, in spite of his confidence in the paternal monitions, he felt himself carried by his tastes and led by his instincts to praise rather than to blame the unheard-of things which were passing before him.

D'Artagnan being, however, a perfect stranger in the crowd of M. de Tréville's courtiers, and this his first appearance in that place, he was at length noticed, and a person came to him and asked him his business there. At this demand, D'Artagnan gave his name very modestly, laid a stress upon the title

of compatriot, and begged the servant who had put the question to him to request a moment's audience of M. de Tréville — a request which the other, with a patronizing air, promised to convey in time and season.

D'Artagnan, a little recovered from his first surprise, had now leisure to study costumes and countenances.

The centre of the most animated group was a musketeer of great height, of a haughty countenance, and dressed in a costume so peculiar as to attract general attention. He did not wear the uniform cloak, — which, indeed, at that time of less liberty and greater independence, was not obligatory, — but a cerulean blue doublet, a little faded and worn, and over this a magnificent baldric worked in gold, which shone like water ripples in the sun. A long cloak of crimson velvet fell in graceful folds from his shoulders, disclosing in front the splendid baldric, from which was suspended a gigantic rapier.

This musketeer had just come off guard, complained of having a cold, and coughed from time to time affectedly. It was for this reason, he said to those around him, he had put on his cloak, and while he spoke with a lofty air and twirled his moustache, all admired his embroidered baldric, and D'Artagnan more than any one.

"What can you expect?" said the musketeer; "the fashion is coming in. It is a folly, I admit, but still it is the fashion. Besides, one must lay out one's inheritance somehow."

"Ah, Porthos!" cried one of his companions; "don't think to palm upon us that you obtained that baldric by paternal generosity: it must have been given to you by that veiled lady with whom I met you the other Sunday, near the gate Saint-Honoré."

"No, 'pon honor; by the faith of a gentleman, I bought it with my own money," answered he whom they had just designated by the name of Porthos.

"Yes," said another musketeer, "you bought it as I did this new purse, with the money my mistress put into the old one."

"What I said is true, though," said Porthos; "and the proof is that I paid twelve pistoles for it."

The wonder was increased, though the doubt continued to exist.

"Didn't I, Aramis?" said Porthos, turning towards another musketeer.

This other musketeer formed a perfect contrast to his interrogator, who had just designated him by the name of Aramis. He was a young man, of about two or three and twenty, with

an open, ingenuous countenance, dark mild eyes, and cheeks rosy and downy as an autumn peach; his delicate moustache marked a perfectly straight line upon his upper lip; he appeared to dread to lower his hands lest their veins should swell, and he pinched the tips of his ears from time to time to preserve their delicate pink transparency. Habitually he spoke little and slowly, bowed frequently, laughed without noise, showing his teeth, which were fine, and of which, as of the rest of his person, he appeared to take the greatest care. He answered the appeal of his friend by an affirmative nod of the head.

This affirmation appeared to dispel all doubts with regard to the baldric; they continued to admire it, but said no more about it; and, by one of those rapid changes of thought, the conversation passed suddenly to another subject.

"What do you think of the story Chalais's esquire relates?" asked another musketeer, without addressing any one in particular.

"And what does he say?" asked Porthos, in a self-sufficient tone.

"He relates that he met at Brussels Rochefort, the cardinal's private tool, disguised as a Capuchin; and that this cursed Rochefort, thanks to his disguise, had tricked M. de Laigues, simpleton that he is."

"A simpleton, indeed!" said Porthos; "but is the matter certain?"

"I had it from Aramis," replied the musketeer.

"Indeed!"

"Why, you know very well, Porthos," said Aramis; "I told you of it yesterday — say nothing more about it."

"Say nothing more about it — that's *your* opinion!" replied Porthos. "Say nothing more about it! Zounds! you come to your conclusions quickly. What! the cardinal sets a spy upon a nobleman, has his letters stolen from him by means of a traitor, a brigand, a rascal, — has, with the help of this spy, and thanks to this correspondence, Chalais's throat cut, under the stupid pretext that he wanted to kill the king and marry Monsieur to the queen! Nobody knew a word of this enigma. You unravelled it yesterday, to the great satisfaction of all; and while we are still gaping with wonder at the news, you come and tell us to-day — 'Let us say no more about it.'"

"Well, then, let us speak about it, since you desire it," replied Aramis, patiently.

"This Rochefort," cried Porthos, "if I were poor Chalais's

esquire, should pass a minute or two very uncomfortably with me."

"And you — you would pass rather a sad half-hour with the Red Duke," replied Aramis.

"Oh! oh! the Red Duke! bravo! bravo! the Red Duke!" cried Porthos, clapping his hands and nodding his head. "The Red Duke is capital. I'll circulate that saying, be assured, my dear fellow. Who says this Aramis is not a wit? What a misfortune it is you did not follow your first vocation — what a delightful abbé you would have made!"

"Oh, it's only a temporary postponement," replied Aramis. "I shall be one some day. You very well know, Porthos, that I continue to study theology for that purpose."

"He will be one, as he says," cried Porthos; "he will be one, sooner or later."

"Soon," said Aramis.

"He only waits for one thing to determine him to resume his cassock, which hangs behind his uniform," said another musketeer.

"What is he waiting for?" asked another.

"Only till the queen has given an heir to the crown of France."

"No jokes upon that subject, gentlemen," said Porthos; "thank God, the queen is still of an age to give one."

"They say that the Duke of Buckingham is in France," replied Aramis, with a significant smile, which gave to this sentence, apparently so simple, a tolerably scandalous meaning.

"Aramis, my good friend, this time you are wrong," interrupted Porthos; "your wit is always leading you astray; if M. de Tréville heard you, you would repent of speaking thus."

"Are you going to teach me better, Porthos," cried Aramis, from whose usually mild eye a flash passed like lightning.

"My dear fellow, be a musketeer or an abbé. Be one or the other, but not both," replied Porthos. "You know what Athos told you the other day: you eat at everybody's mess. Ah! don't be angry, I beg of you — that would be useless; you know what is agreed upon between you, Athos, and me. You go to Madame d'Aiguillon's, and you pay your court to her; you go to Madame de Bois-Tracy's, the cousin of Madame de Chevreuse, and you pass for being far advanced in the good graces of that lady. Oh, good Lord! don't trouble yourself to

reveal your good fortunes; no one asks for your secret — all the world knows your discretion. But since you possess that virtue, why the devil don't you make use of it with respect to her Majesty? Let whoever likes talk of the king and the cardinal, and as he likes; but the queen is sacred, and if any one speaks of her, let it be with respect."

"Porthos, you are as vain as Narcissus, I plainly tell you so," replied Aramis; "you know I hate moralizing, except when it is done by Athos. As to you, good sir, you wear too magnificent a baldric to be strong on that head. I will be an abbé if it suits me; in the meanwhile I am a musketeer. In that quality I say what I please, and at this moment it pleases me to say that you annoy me."

"Aramis!"

"Porthos!"

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried the surrounding group.

"Monsieur de Tréville awaits M. d'Artagnan," interrupted a servant, throwing open the door of the office.

At this announcement, during which the door remained open, every one became mute, and amidst the general silence the young man crossed the ante-chamber at one end, and entered the apartment of the captain of the musketeers, congratulating himself with all his heart at having so opportunely escaped the end of this strange quarrel.

CHAPTER III.

THE AUDIENCE.

M. DE TRÉVILLE was at this moment in a very ill-humor; nevertheless he politely saluted the young man, who bowed to the very ground, and he smiled on receiving his compliment, the Béarnese accent of which recalled to him at the same time his youth and his country, a double remembrance which makes a man smile at all ages. But stepping almost immediately towards the ante-chamber, and making a sign to D'Artagnan with his hand, as if to ask his permission to finish with others before he began with him, he called three times, with a louder voice at each time, so that he went through all the tones between the imperative accent and the angry accent.

"Athos! Porthos! Aramis!"

The two musketeers, with whom we have already made

acquaintance, and who answered to the last two of these three names, immediately quitted the group of which they formed a part, and advanced towards the office, the door of which closed after them as soon as they had entered. Their bearing, though not entirely composed, was full of a dignified and submissive indifference which excited the admiration of D'Artagnan, who beheld in these two men demi-gods, and in their leader an Olympian Jupiter, armed with all his thunders.

When the two musketeers had entered, when the door was closed behind them, when the buzzing murmur of the antechamber, to which the summons which had just been made had doubtless furnished fresh aliment, had recommenced, when M. de Tréville had three or four times paced in silence, and with a frowning brow, the whole length of his office passing each time before Porthos and Aramis, who were as upright and silent as if on parade, he stopped all at once full in front of them, and looking at them angrily from head to foot —

"Do you know what the king said to me," cried he, "and that no longer ago than yesterday evening — do you know, gentlemen?"

"No," replied the two musketeers, after a moment's silence; "no, sir, we do not."

"But I hope that you will do us the honor to tell us," added Aramis, in his politest tone, and with the most graceful bow.

"He told me that he should henceforth recruit his musketeers from among the guards of the cardinal."

"The guards of the cardinal! and why so?" asked Porthos, warmly.

"Because he plainly perceives that his piquette[1] stands in need of being enlivened by a mixture of good wine."

The two musketeers colored up to the eyes. D'Artagnan did not know where he was, and would have liked to be a hundred feet underground.

"Yes, yes," continued M. de Tréville, growing warmer as he spoke, "and his Majesty was right, for, upon my honor, it is true that the musketeers make but a miserable figure at court. The cardinal related yesterday, while playing with the king, with an air of condolence not very pleasing to me, that the day before yesterday those damned musketeers, those daredevils, — he dwelt upon those words with an ironical tone still more displeasing to me, — those cleavers, added he, glancing

[1] A liquor squeezed out of grapes, when they have been pressed, and water poured upon them.

at me with his tiger-cat's eye, had been out late in the Rue Ferou, in a tavern, and that a patrol of his guards (I thought he was going to laugh in my face) had been forced to arrest the rioters. Zounds! you must know something about it! Arrest musketeers! You were among them — you were! Don't deny it; you were recognized, and the cardinal named you. But it's all my fault! yes, it's all my fault, because it is I myself who select my men. You, now, Aramis, why the devil did you ask me for a uniform, when you were going to be so fine in a cassock? And you, Porthos, do you only wear such a fine golden baldric to suspend a sword of straw from it? And Athos — I don't see Athos! Where is he?"

"Sir," replied Aramis, in a sorrowful tone, "he is ill, very ill!"

"Ill — very ill, say you? And what is his malady?"

"It is feared that it is the small-pox, sir," replied Porthos, desirous of having a word in the conversation; "and what is sad is that it will certainly spoil his face."

"The small-pox! That's another fine story to tell me, Porthos! Sick of the small-pox at his age! No, no; but wounded, without doubt, — perhaps killed. Ah, if I knew! S'blood! Sir musketeers, I will not have this haunting of bad places, this quarrelling in the streets, this sword-play at the cross-roads, and, above all, I will not have any opportunity given to the cardinal's guards, who are brave, quiet, skilful men, who never put themselves in a position to be arrested, and who, besides, would never allow themselves to be arrested, to laugh at you! I am sure of it — they would prefer dying on the spot to being arrested, or to retreating a step. To run, to clear out, to fly! a pretty thing to be said of the king's musketeers!"

Porthos and Aramis trembled with rage; they would willingly have strangled M. de Tréville, if, at the bottom of all this, they had not felt it was the great love he bore them which made him speak thus. They stamped upon the carpet with their feet, they bit their lips till the blood came, and grasped the hilts of their swords with all their might. All in the next room had heard, as we have said, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis called, and had guessed from M. de Tréville's tone of voice that he was very angry about something. Ten curious heads were leaning against the tapestry, and growing pale with rage. For their ears, glued to the door, did not lose a syllable of what was said, while their mouths repeated, as he went on, the insulting expressions of the captain to the whole

population of the ante-chamber. In an instant, from the door of the office to the street-gate, the whole house was in a state of commotion.

"Ah! the king's musketeers are arrested by the guards of the cardinal, are they!" continued M. de Tréville, as furious within as his soldiers, but emphasizing his words, and plunging them, one by one, like so many blows of a stiletto, into the bosoms of his auditors. "What! six of his Eminence's guards arrest six of his Majesty's musketeers! Zounds! my mind is made up! I will go straight to the Louvre. I will give in my resignation as captain of the king's musketeers, to take a lieutenancy in the cardinal's guards; and if he refuses me, 'sdeath! I will turn abbé."

At these words, the murmur outside became an explosion; nothing was to be heard but oaths and blasphemies. Such expressions as zounds! 'sblood! the devil-take-us! clashed in the air. D'Artagnan looked round for some tapestry behind which he might hide himself, and felt an immense inclination to crawl under the table.

"Well, captain," said Porthos, quite beside himself, "the truth is, that we were six against six, but we were not captured by fair means, and before we had time to draw our swords two of our party were dead; and Athos, grievously wounded, was very little better. For you know Athos. Well, captain, he endeavored twice to get up, and fell again twice. And we did not surrender — no! they dragged us away by force. On the way we escaped. As for Athos, they believed him to be dead, and left him very quietly on the field of battle, not thinking it worth the while to carry him away. Now, that's the whole story. What the devil, captain, one cannot win all one's battles! The great Pompey lost that of Pharsalia, and Francis the First, who was, as I have heard say, as good as any one else, nevertheless lost the battle of Pavia."

"And I have the honor of assuring you that I killed one of them with his own sword," said Aramis, "for mine was broken at the first parry. Killed him, or poniarded him, sir, as is most agreeable to you."

"I did not know that," replied M. de Tréville, in a somewhat softened tone. "The cardinal exaggerated, as I perceive."

"But pray, sir," continued Aramis, who, seeing his captain relenting, took courage to make a petition, "pray, sir, do not say that Athos is wounded. He would be in despair if that should come to the ears of the king, and as the wound is very

serious, seeing that after crossing the shoulder it penetrates into the chest, it is to be feared — "

At this instant the tapestry was raised, and a noble and handsome face, but frightfully pale, appeared under the fringe.

"Athos!" cried the two musketeers.

"Athos!" repeated M. de Tréville to himself.

"You have sent for me, sir," said Athos to M. de Tréville, in a feeble yet perfectly calm voice, "you have sent for me, as my comrades inform me, and I have hastened to receive your orders. I am here, sir; what do you want with me?"

And at these words the musketeer, in irreproachable costume, belted as usual, with a firm step entered the room. M. de Tréville, moved to the bottom of his heart by this proof of courage, sprang towards him.

"I was about to say to these gentlemen," added he, "that I forbid my musketeers to expose their lives needlessly; for brave men are very dear to the king, and the king knows that his musketeers are the bravest fellows on earth. Your hand, Athos!"

And without waiting until the new-comer should himself respond to this proof of affection, M. de Tréville seized his right hand, and pressed it with all his might, without perceiving that Athos, whatever might be his self-command, allowed a slight murmur of pain to escape him, and, if possible, grew paler than he was before.

The door had remained open, so strong was the excitement produced by the arrival of Athos, whose wound, though kept as secret as possible, was known to all. A loud murmur of satisfaction hailed the last words of the captain, and two or three persons, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, appeared through the openings of the tapestry. Doubtless M. de Tréville was about to reprehend severely this infringement on the rules of etiquette, when he suddenly felt the hand of Athos contract within his, and, upon turning his eyes towards him, perceived he was about to faint. At the same instant Athos, who had rallied all his energies to contend against pain, at length overcome by it, fell upon the floor as if he was dead.

"A surgeon!" cried M. de Tréville; "mine! the king's! the best that can be found! — a surgeon! or, 'sblood! my brave Athos will die!"

At the cries of M. de Tréville, the whole assemblage rushed into the room without his thinking of shutting the door against any one, and all crowded round the wounded man.

But all this eager attention would have been useless if the doctor so loudly called for had not chanced to be in the hotel itself. He pushed through the crowd, approached Athos, still insensible, and, as all this noise and commotion inconvenienced him greatly, he required, as the first and most urgent thing, that the musketeer should be carried into another chamber. Immediately M. de Tréville opened the door, and pointed the way to Porthos and Aramis, who carried off their comrade in their arms. Behind this group walked the surgeon, and as the surgeon passed through the door closed upon him.

The office of M. de Tréville, generally held so sacred, became for a moment the annex of the ante-chamber. Every one spoke, harangued, and vociferated, swearing, cursing, and consigning the cardinal and his guards to all the devils.

An instant after, Porthos and Aramis returned, the surgeon and M. de Tréville alone remaining with the wounded man.

At length M. de Tréville himself came back. Athos had recovered his senses; the surgeon declared that the situation of the musketeer had nothing in it to render his friends uneasy, his weakness having been purely and simply caused by loss of blood.

Then M. de Tréville made a sign with his hand, and all retired except D'Artagnan, who did not forget that he had an audience, and, with the tenacity of a Gascon, remained in his place.

When all had gone out and the door was closed, M. de Tréville, on turning round, found himself alone with the young man. The stirring event which had just taken place had in some degree broken the thread of his ideas. He inquired what was the desire of his persevering visitor. D'Artagnan then repeated his name, and in an instant, recalling his memory of the past and the present, M. de Tréville was in possession of the situation.

"Pardon me," said he, smiling, "pardon me, my dear compatriot, but I had entirely forgotten you. But what help is there for it! a captain is nothing but a father of a family, charged with even a greater responsibility than the father of an ordinary family. Soldiers are big children; but as I maintain that the orders of the king, and more particularly the orders of the cardinal, should be executed —"

D'Artagnan could not restrain a smile. By this smile M. de Tréville judged that he had not to deal with a fool, and, changing the subject, came straight to the point.

"I loved your father very much," said he. "What can I do for the son? Tell me quickly — my time is not my own."

"Sir," said D'Artagnan, "on leaving Tarbes and coming hither, it was my intention to request of you, in remembrance of the friendship which you have not forgotten, the uniform of a musketeer. But after all that I have seen during the last two hours, I have become aware of the value of such a favor, and tremble lest I should not merit it."

"Well, young man," replied M. de Tréville, "it is, in fact, a favor, but it may not be so far beyond your hopes as you believe, or rather as you appear to believe. Yet his Majesty's decision is always necessary, and I inform you with regret that no one becomes a musketeer without the preliminary ordeal of several campaigns, certain brilliant actions, or a service of two years in some regiment less favored than ours."

D'Artagnan bowed without replying, feeling his desire to don the musketeer's uniform vastly increased by the difficulties which he had learned must precede the attainment of it.

"But," continued M. de Tréville, fixing upon his compatriot a look so piercing that it might be said he wished to read the thoughts of his heart, "but, on account of my old companion, your father, as I have said, I will do something for you, young man. Our cadets from Béarn are not generally very rich, and I have no reason to think matters have much changed in this respect since I left the province. I dare say you have not brought too large a stock of money with you?"

D'Artagnan drew himself up with an air that plainly said, "I ask charity of no man."

"Oh! that's all very well, young man," continued M. de Tréville, "that's all very well. I am well acquainted with all those lofty airs. I myself came to Paris with four crowns in my purse, and would have fought with any one who would have dared to tell me I was not in a condition to purchase the Louvre."

D'Artagnan drew himself up still more proudly; thanks to the sale of his horse, he commenced his career with four crowns more than M. de Tréville had possessed at the commencement of his.

"You need, I say, then, to husband the means you have, however large the sum may be, but you ought also to endeavor to perfect yourself in the exercises becoming a gentleman. I will write a letter to-day to the director of the Royal

Academy, and to-morrow he will admit you without any expense to yourself. Do not refuse this little service. Our best-born and richest gentlemen sometimes solicit it without being able to obtain it. You will learn riding, swordsmanship in all its branches, and dancing. You will make some desirable acquaintances, and from time to time you can call upon me, just to tell me how you are getting on, and to say whether I can be of any service to you."

D'Artagnan, stranger as he was to all the manners of a court, could not but perceive a little coldness in this reception.

"Alas! sir," said he, "I can but perceive how sadly I miss the letter of introduction which my father gave me to present to you."

"I certainly am surprised," replied M. de Tréville, "that you should undertake so long a journey without that necessary viaticum, the only resource of us poor Béarnese."

"I had one, sir, and, thank God, such as I could wish," cried D'Artagnan, "but it was perfidiously stolen from me."

He then related the adventure at Meung, described the unknown gentleman with the greatest minuteness, and all with a warmth and truthfulness that delighted M. de Tréville.

"This is all very strange," said the latter, after meditating a minute; "you mentioned my name, then, aloud?"

"Yes, sir, I certainly committed that imprudence; but why should I have done otherwise? A name like yours was to serve me as a buckler on my way. You can fancy whether I often hid myself behind it or no!"

Flattery was at that period very much in fashion, and M. de Tréville loved incense as well as a king, or even a cardinal. He could not then refrain from a smile of evident satisfaction, but this smile soon disappeared; and returning to the adventure at Meung —

"Tell me," continued he, "had not this gentleman a slight scar on his cheek?"

"Yes, such a one as would be made by the grazing of a ball."

"Was he not a fine-looking man?"

"Yes."

"Of lofty stature?"

"Yes."

"Of pale complexion and brown hair?"

"Yes, yes, that is he; how is it, sir, that you are acquainted with this man? If ever I should meet him again, and I will find him, I swear — were it in hell —"

"He was waiting for a woman," continued Tréville.

"He, at least, departed immediately after having conversed for a minute with the one for whom he was waiting."

"You do not know what was the subject of their conversation?"

"He gave her a box, told her that box contained her instructions, and desired her not to open it before she arrived in London."

"Was this any English woman?"

"He called her Milady."

"It is he! it must be he!" murmured Tréville; "I thought he was still at Brussels!"

"Oh! sir; if you know who and what this man is," cried D'Artagnan, "tell me who he is, and whence he is. I will then release you from all your promises — even that of procuring my admission into the musketeers. For, before everything, I wish to avenge myself."

"Beware, young man!" cried de Tréville; "if you see him coming on one side of the street, pass by on the other! Do not cast yourself against such a rock, he would break you like glass."

"That thought will not prevent me," replied D'Artagnan, "if ever I should happen to meet with him" —

"In the meantime, if you will take my advice, you will not seek him," said Tréville.

All at once the captain stopped, as if struck by a sudden suspicion. This great hatred which the young traveller manifested so loudly for this man, who — a rather improbable thing — had stolen his father's letter from him! — was there not some perfidy concealed under this hatred? — might not this young man be sent by his Eminence? — might he not have come for the purpose of laying a snare for him? — this pretended D'Artagnan! was he not an emissary of the cardinal's whom he sought to introduce into his house, to place near him, and win his confidence, and afterwards to bring about his ruin, as had been practised in a thousand other instances? He fixed his eyes upon D'Artagnan even more earnestly than before. He was moderately reassured, however, by the aspect of that countenance, full of shrewd intelligence and affected humility.

I know indeed he is a Gascon, reflected he; but he may be one for the cardinal as well as for me. Let us try him. "My friend," said he, slowly, "I wish, as the son of an old friend — for I consider this story of the lost letter perfectly

true — I wish, I say, in order to repair the coldness you have noticed in my reception of you, to make you acquainted with the secrets of our policy. The king and the cardinal are the best of friends; their apparent bickerings are only feints to deceive fools. I am not willing that a compatriot, a handsome cavalier, a brave youth, quite fit to make his way, should become the dupe of all these artifices, and fall stupidly into the snare, after the example of so many others who have been ruined by it. Be assured that I am devoted to both these all-powerful masters, and that my earnest endeavor shall never have any other aim than the service of the king and that of the cardinal, one of the most illustrious geniuses that France has ever produced.

"Now, young man, regulate your conduct accordingly, and if you entertain, whether from your family, your associations, or even from your instincts, any of those enmities against the cardinal which we see constantly breaking out among the nobles, bid me adieu, and let us separate. I will aid you in many ways, but without attaching you to my person. I hope that my frankness, at all events, will make you my friend, for you are the only young man to whom I have hitherto spoken as I am now doing."

Tréville said to himself:

"If the cardinal has set this young fox upon me, he will certainly not have failed — he, who knows how bitterly I execrate him — to tell his spy that the best means of paying court to me is to rail at him. Therefore, in spite of my protestations, if it be as I suspect, my cunning gossip here will launch out in abuse of his Eminence."

It proved, however, entirely different from what Tréville expected. D'Artagnan answered, with the greatest simplicity:

"I am come to Paris with exactly such intentions, sir. My father advised me to stoop to nobody but the king, the cardinal, and you — whom he considers the first three personages in France."

D'Artagnan added M. de Tréville to the two others, as may be perceived; but he thought this addition would do no harm.

"I therefore hold the cardinal in the greatest veneration," continued he; "and have the greatest respect for his actions. So much the better for me, sir, if you speak to me, as you say, with frankness, for then you will do me the honor to hold in esteem our similarity of taste; but if you have entertained any mistrust, as naturally you may, I feel that I am ruining myself by speaking the truth. But, come what may, you will

not fail to esteem me, and that is what I care for more than anything in the world."

M. de Tréville was surprised to the last degree. So much penetration — so much frankness — created admiration, but did not entirely remove his suspicions. The more this young man was superior to others, the more he was to be dreaded, if he meant to deceive him. Nevertheless, he pressed D'Artagnan's hand, and said to him:

"You are an honest youth; but, at the present moment, I can only do for you that which I just now offered. My house will be always open to you. Hereafter, being able to ask for me at all hours, and consequently to take advantage of all opportunities, you will probably obtain what you desire."

"That is to say, sir," replied D'Artagnan, "that you will wait till I have made myself worthy of it. Well! be assured," added he, with the familiarity of a Gascon, "you will not wait long." And he bowed, on retiring, as if he considered the future was his own concern.

"But wait a minute," said M. de Tréville, stopping him. "I promised you a letter to the director of the Academy. Are you too proud to accept it, young gentleman?"

"No, sir," said D'Artagnan; "and I will answer for it that this one shall not fare like the other. I will guard it so carefully that I swear it shall arrive at its address, and woe be to him who shall attempt to take it from me!"

M. de Tréville smiled at this bragging; and, leaving his young compatriot in the embrasure of the window, where they had talked together, he seated himself at a table, in order to write the promised letter of recommendation. While he was doing this, D'Artagnan, having no better employment, amused himself with beating a march upon the window, and with looking at the musketeers, who went away, one after another, following them with his eyes till they disappeared at the bend of the street.

M. de Tréville, after having written the letter, sealed it, and rising, approached the young man, in order to give it to him. But, at the very moment that D'Artagnan stretched out his hand to receive it, M. de Tréville was highly astonished to see his *protégé* make a sudden spring, become crimson with passion, and rush from the room, crying — "Ah! 'Sblood! he shall not escape me this time!"

"Who? who?" asked M. de Tréville.

"He, my thief!" replied D'Artagnan. "Ah! the traitor!" and he disappeared.

"The devil take the madman!" murmured M. de Tréville, "unless," added he, "this is a cunning mode of escaping, seeing that he has failed in his purpose!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHOULDER OF ATHOS, THE BALDRIC OF PORTHOS, AND THE HANDKERCHIEF OF ARAMIS.

D'Artagnan, in a state of rage, crossed the ante-chamber in three bounds, and was darting towards the stairs, which he reckoned upon descending four steps at a time, when, in his heedless course, he ran head foremost against a musketeer, who was coming out of one of M. de Tréville's private rooms, and, hitting his shoulder violently, made him utter a cry, or rather a howl.

"Excuse me," said D'Artagnan, endeavoring to resume his course, "excuse me, but I am in a hurry."

Scarcely had he descended the first stair, when a hand of iron seized him by the scarf and stopped him.

"You are in a hurry," said the musketeer, as pale as a sheet; "under that pretence you run against me. You say, 'Excuse me!' and you believe that that is sufficient? Not at all, my young man. Do you fancy that because you have heard M. de Tréville speak to us a little cavalierly to-day, that other people are to treat us as he speaks to us? Undeceive yourself, companion, you are not M. de Tréville."

"'Pon my word!" replied D'Artagnan, recognizing Athos, who, after having his wounds dressed by the doctor, was going to his own apartment, "on my word, I did not do it intentionally, and, not having done it intentionally, I said, 'Excuse me!' It appears to me that that is quite enough. I repeat to you, however, and this time it is too much perhaps, — on my word of honor I am in great haste, great haste. Loose your hold then, I beg of you, and let me go where my business calls me."

"Sir," said Athos, letting him go, "you are not polite; it is easy to perceive that you come from a distance."

D'Artagnan had already strode down three or four stairs, when Athos's last remark stopped him short.

"Zounds, sir!" said he, "however far I may have come, it is not you who can give me a lesson in good manners, I warn you."

"Perhaps!" said Athos.

"Ah! if I were not in such haste, and if I were not running after some one!" said D'Artagnan.

"Mister Man-in-a-hurry, you can find me without running after me; me! do you understand me?"

"And where, I pray you?"

"Near the Carmes-Deschaux."

"At what hour?"

"About noon."

"About noon; that will do, I will be there."

"Try not to make me wait, for at a quarter past twelve I will cut off your ears as you run."

"Good!" cried D'Artagnan, "I will be there ten minutes before twelve."

And he set off, running as if the devil possessed him, hoping that he might yet find the unknown, whose slow pace could not have carried him far.

But at the street gate Porthos was talking with the soldier on guard. Between the two talkers there was just room for a man to pass. D'Artagnan thought it would suffice for him, and he sprang forward like a dart between them. But D'Artagnan had reckoned without the wind. As he was about to pass, the wind blew out Porthos's long cloak, and D'Artagnan rushed straight into the middle of it. Without doubt, Porthos had reasons for not abandoning this essential part of his vestments, for, instead of letting go the flap, which he was holding, he pulled it towards him, so that D'Artagnan rolled himself up in the velvet, by a movement of rotation explained by the resistance of the obstinate Porthos.

D'Artagnan, hearing the musketeer swear, wished to escape from under the cloak which blinded him, and endeavored to make his way out of its folds. He was particularly anxious to avoid marring the freshness of the magnificent baldric we are acquainted with; but on timidly opening his eyes, he found himself with his nose fixed between the two shoulders of Porthos, that is to say, exactly upon the baldric.

Alas! like most of the things in this world which have nothing in their favor but appearance, the baldric was glittering with gold in the front, but was nothing but simple buff behind. Vain-glorious as he was, Porthos could not afford to have an entirely gold-worked baldric, but had, at least, half a one. The pretext about the cold and the necessity for the cloak were thus exposed.

"Good Lord!" cried Porthos, making strong efforts to get

rid of D'Artagnan, who was wriggling about his back, "the fellow must be mad to run against people in this manner."

"Excuse me!" said D'Artagnan, reappearing under the shoulder of the giant, "but I am in such haste — I was running after some one, and —"

"And do you always forget your eyes when you happen to be in a hurry?" asked Porthos.

"No," replied D'Artagnan, piqued, "no; and, thanks to my eyes, I can see what other people cannot see."

Whether Porthos understood him or did not understand him, the fact is that, giving way to his anger, —

"Sir," said he, "I warn you that you stand a chance of getting chastised if you run against musketeers in this fashion."

"Chastised, sir!" said D'Artagnan. "The expression is strong."

"It is one that becomes a man accustomed to look his enemies in the face."

"Ah! Zounds! I know full well that you do not turn your back to yours!"

And the young man, delighted with his joke, went away laughing with all his might.

Porthos foamed with rage, and started to rush after D'Artagnan.

"Wait awhile, wait awhile," cried the latter, "when you haven't your cloak on."

"At one o'clock, then, behind the Luxembourg."

"Very well, at one o'clock then," replied D'Artagnan, turning the angle of the street.

But neither in the street through which he had passed, nor in the one which his glance now eagerly scanned, could he see any one. However slowly the unknown had walked, he had gained ground, or, perhaps, had entered some house. D'Artagnan inquired of every one he met, went down to the ferry, came up again by the Rue de Seine and the Croix Rouge, but he could see nothing of him, absolutely nothing! This race was, however, advantageous to him in one sense, for in proportion as the perspiration broke from his forehead, his heart began to cool.

He began to reflect upon the events that had passed. They were numerous and inauspicious. It was scarcely eleven o'clock in the morning, and yet this morning had already brought him into disgrace with M. de Tréville, who could not fail to think the manner in which D'Artagnan had left him a little cavalier.

Besides this, he had drawn upon himself two good duels with two men, each capable of killing three D'Artagnans; with two musketeers, in short, with two of those beings whom he esteemed so highly that he placed them in his mind and heart above all other men.

Conjectures were not encouraging. Sure of being killed by Athos, it may easily be understood that the young man was not very uneasy about Porthos. As hope, however, is the last thing extinguished in the heart of man, he ended by hoping that he might survive, although terribly wounded in both these duels, and in case of surviving he made the following reflections upon his own conduct:

"What a hare-brained, stupid fellow I am! That brave and unfortunate Athos was wounded exactly on that shoulder against which I must run head-foremost, like a ram. The only thing that astonishes me is that he did not strike me dead at once; he had good cause to do so. The pain I gave him must have been horrible. As to Porthos — oh! as to Porthos, upon my word, that is stranger still!"

And, in spite of himself, the young man began to laugh aloud, looking round carefully, however, lest some one, hearing and not understanding his merriment, should be offended.

"As to Porthos, that is certainly strange, but I am not the less a giddy fool. Are people to be run against without warning? No! and have I any right to go and peep under their cloaks to see what is not there? He would have pardoned me, he would certainly have pardoned me, if I had not said anything to him about that cursed baldric, in ambiguous words, it is true, but rather neatly ambiguous! Ah! cursed Gascon that I am, I get from one hobble into another. Friend D'Artagnan," continued he, speaking to himself with all the amenity that he thought due to himself, "if you escape, of which there is not much chance, I would advise you to practise perfect politeness for the future. You must henceforth be admired and quoted as a model of it. To be obliging and polite does not necessarily make a man a coward. Look at Aramis now; Aramis is mildness and grace personified. Well! did ever anybody dream of saying that Aramis is a coward? No, certainly not, and from this moment I will endeavor to model myself after him. Ah! how strange, here he is!"

D'Artagnan, walking and soliloquizing, had arrived within a few steps of the Hôtel d'Aiguillon, and in front of that hôtel perceived Aramis chatting gayly with three gentlemen of the king's guards. Aramis also perceived D'Artagnan; but as he

had not forgotten that it was in the presence of this young man that M. de Tréville had been so angry in the morning, and that a witness of the rebuke the musketeers had received was not likely to be at all agreeable, he pretended not to see him. D'Artagnan, on the contrary, quite full of his plans of conciliation and courtesy, approached the young men with a profound bow, accompanied by a most gracious smile. Aramis bowed his head slightly, but did not smile. All four of them immediately ceased talking.

D'Artagnan was not so dull as not to perceive that he was not wanted, but he was not sufficiently acquainted with the ways of the world to know how to withdraw with ease from the awkward position of having forced himself upon persons he scarcely knew, and having joined in a conversation which did not concern him. He was seeking in his mind, then, for the least disagreeable means of retreat, when he remarked that Aramis had let his handkerchief fall, and by mistake, no doubt, had placed his foot upon it, and it appeared a favorable opportunity to atone for his intrusion. He stooped, and, with the most gracious air he could assume, drew the handkerchief from under the foot of the musketeer, in spite of the efforts the latter made to detain it, and holding it out to him, said:

"I believe, sir, that this is a handkerchief you would be sorry to lose?"

The handkerchief was, in fact, richly embroidered, and had a coronet and arms at one of its corners. Aramis blushed excessively, and snatched rather than took the handkerchief from D'Artagnan's hand.

"Ah! ah!" cried one of the guards, "will you persist in saying, most discreet Aramis, that you are not on good terms with Madame de Bois-Tracy, when that gracious lady has the kindness to lend you her handkerchief?"

Aramis darted at D'Artagnan one of those looks which inform a man that he has acquired a mortal enemy; then, resuming his mild air, —

"You are deceived, gentlemen," said he; "this handkerchief is not mine, and I cannot fancy why the gentleman has taken it into his head to offer it to me rather than to one of you, and as a proof of what I say, here is mine in my pocket."

So saying, he pulled out his own handkerchief, which was likewise a very elegant handkerchief, and of fine cambric, though cambric was then dear, but a handkerchief with embroidery and without arms, only ornamented with a single cipher, that of its owner.

This time D'Artagnan kept silence — he perceived his mistake. But the friends of Aramis were not at all convinced by his assertion, and one of them, addressing the young musketeer with affected seriousness, —

"If it were as you pretend it is," said he, "I should be forced, my dear Aramis, to reclaim it myself; for, as you very well know, Bois-Tracy is an intimate friend of mine, and I cannot allow the property of his wife to be sported as a trophy."

"You make the demand in bad form," replied Aramis; "and while I acknowledge the justice of your claim, I refuse it on account of the manner of its presentation."

"The fact is," hazarded D'Artagnan timidly, "I did not see the handkerchief fall from the pocket of M. Aramis. He had his foot upon it, that is all, and I thought from his having his foot upon it the handkerchief was his."

"And you were deceived, my dear sir," replied Aramis, coldly, and little affected by the offer of atonement; then turning towards that one of the guards who had declared himself the friend of Bois-Tracy, — "besides," continued he, "I have reflected, my dear intimate friend of Bois-Tracy, that I am not less tenderly his friend than you probably are, so that decidedly this handkerchief is as likely to have fallen from your pocket as mine."

"No, upon my honor!" cried his Majesty's guardsman.

"You are about to swear upon your honor and I upon my word, and then it will be pretty evident that one of us will have lied. Now here, Montaran, we will do better than that: let us each take a half."

"Of the handkerchief?"

"Yes."

"Perfectly just," cried the two other guards; "the judgment of King Solomon! Aramis, you certainly are cram-full of wisdom."

The young men burst into a loud laugh, and, as may be supposed, the affair had no other sequel. In a moment or two the conversation ceased, and the three guards and the musketeer, after having cordially shaken hands, separated, the guards going one way and Aramis another.

"Now is my time to make my peace with this gentleman," said D'Artagnan to himself, having kept at a little distance all the latter part of the conversation; and with this good feeling he drew near to Aramis, who was going away without paying any attention to him.

"Sir," said he, "you will excuse me, I hope."

"Ah!" interrupted Aramis, "allow me to call to your attention that you have not acted in this affair as a man of good breeding ought to have."

"What!" cried D'Artagnan; "you suppose —"

"I suppose, sir, that you are not a fool, and that you know very well, although coming from Gascony, that people do not tread upon pocket handkerchiefs without a reason. What the devil! Paris is not paved with cambric!"

"Sir, you do wrong in endeavoring to mortify me," said D'Artagnan, to whom his quarrelsome nature began to speak more loudly than his pacific resolutions. "I am from Gascony, it is true; and since you know it, there is no need of telling you that Gascons are not very patient, so that when they have asked pardon once, were it even for a folly, they are convinced that they have done already at least as much again as they ought to have done."

"Sir, what I say to you about the matter," said Aramis, "is not for the sake of seeking a quarrel. Thank God! I am not a bully, and, being a musketeer only for a time, I only fight when I am forced to do so, and always with great repugnance. But this time the affair is serious, for here is a lady compromised by you."

"By us, you mean," cried D'Artagnan.

"Why did you so awkwardly give me the handkerchief?"

"Why did you so awkwardly let it fall?"

"I have said, sir, that the handkerchief did not fall from my pocket."

"Well, and by saying so you have lied twice, sir, for I saw it fall."

"Oh, oh! you take it up in that way, do you, Master Gascon? Well, I will teach you how to behave yourself."

"And I will send you back to your mass-book, Master Abbé. Draw, if you please, and right away."

"Not at all, if you please, my good friend; not here, at least. Do you not perceive that we are opposite the Hôtel d'Aiguillon, which is full of the cardinal's creatures? How do I know that it is not his Eminence who has honored you with the commission to bring him my head? Now I really entertain a ridiculous partiality for my head, because it seems to suit my shoulders so admirably. I have no objection to killing you, depend upon that, but quietly, in a snug remote place, where you will not be able to boast of your death to anybody."

"I agree, sir; but do not be too confident. Take away your

handkerchief; whether it belongs to you or another, you may, perhaps, stand in need of it."

"The gentleman is a Gascon?" asked Aramis.

"Yes. The gentleman does not postpone a meeting through prudence."

"Prudence, sir, is a virtue quite useless to musketeers, I know, but indispensable to churchmen; and as I am only a musketeer provisionally, I deem it best to be prudent. At two o'clock I shall have the honor of expecting you at the hôtel of M. de Tréville. There I will point out to you the best place and time."

The two young men bowed and separated, Aramis ascending the street which led to the Luxembourg, while D'Artagnan, perceiving that the appointed hour was approaching, took the road to the Carmes Deschaux, saying to himself, "Decidedly I can't draw back; but at least, if I am killed, I shall be killed by a musketeer!"

CHAPTER V.

THE KING'S MUSKETEERS AND THE CARDINAL'S GUARDS.

D'Artagnan was not acquainted with anybody in Paris. He went, therefore, to his appointment with Athos without a second, determined to be satisfied with those his adversary should choose. Besides, his mind was fixed on making the brave musketeer all suitable apologies, but without meanness or weakness, fearing that the result of this duel would be the usual unfortunate result of an affair of this kind, when a young and vigorous man fights with an adversary who is wounded and enfeebled: if conquered, he doubles the triumph of his antagonist; if a conqueror, he is accused of foul play and cheap courage.

Now, we must have badly sketched the character of our adventurer, or our readers must have already perceived that D'Artagnan was not a common man. Therefore while repeating to himself that his death was inevitable, he did not make up his mind to die as easily as another, less courageous and less moderate than he, might have done in his place. He reflected upon the different characters of the men he had to fight with, and began to see into his own situation more clearly. He hoped, by means of loyal excuses, to make a friend of Athos, whose lordly air and austere bearing were very

pleasing to him. He flattered himself he should be able to frighten Porthos with the adventure of the baldric, which he could, if not killed upon the spot, relate to everybody — a story that, well managed, would cover Porthos with ridicule. As to the astute Aramis, he did not entertain much dread of him, and supposing that he should get so far, he determined to despatch him in good style, or, at least, by hitting him in the face, as Cæsar recommended his soldiers to do to those of Pompey, damage forever that beauty of which he was so proud.

And, finally, D'Artagnan possessed that invincible stock of resolution which the counsels of his father had deposited in his heart, and which were summed up in: "Endure nothing from any one but the king, the cardinal, and M. de Tréville." He flew, then, rather than walked, towards the monastery of the Carmes Déchaussés, or rather Deschaux, as they said at that time, a sort of building without a window, surrounded by barren fields, an annex to the Pré-aux-Clercs, and which was generally employed as the place for the meetings of men who had no time to lose.

When D'Artagnan arrived in sight of the bare spot of ground which stretched out at the base of the monastery, Athos had been waiting about five minutes, and twelve o'clock was striking. He was, then, as punctual as the Samaritan woman, and the most rigorous casuist on duels could have nothing to say.

Athos, who still suffered grievously from his wound, though it had been freshly dressed by M. de Tréville's surgeon, was seated on a stone, awaiting his adversary with that placid countenance and that noble air which never forsook him. At sight of D'Artagnan, he arose and politely came a few steps to meet him. The latter, on his part, saluted his adversary with hat in hand, and his feather even touching the ground.

"Sir," said Athos, "I have engaged two of my friends as seconds, but these two friends have not yet come. I am astonished at their delay, as it is not at all their custom to be behindhand."

"I have no seconds on my part, sir," said D'Artagnan; "for, having reached Paris only yesterday, I, as yet, know no one but M. de Tréville, to whom I was recommended by my father, who has the honor to be, in some degree, one of his friends."

Athos reflected for an instant.

"You know no one but M. de Tréville?" he asked.

"No, sir; I know only him."

"Well, well," continued Athos, speaking partly to himself, "well, well, if I kill you, I shall have the air of a child-eater."

"Not too much so," replied D'Artagnan, with a bow that was not deficient in dignity; "not too much so, since you do me the honor to draw sword against me while suffering from a wound which must bother you very much."

"Very much, upon my word, and you hurt me devilishly, I can tell you; but I will use the left hand — I usually do so under such circumstances. Do not fancy, though, that I favor you — I use both hands equally; and it will be even a disadvantage to you — a left-handed man is very troublesome to people who are not prepared for it. I regret I did not inform you sooner of this circumstance."

"You are truly, sir," said D'Artagnan, bowing again, "very courteous, for which, I assure you, I am extremely grateful."

"You confuse me," replied Athos, with his gentlemanly air; "I beg of you, let us talk of something else, unless it is displeasing to you. Ah! 'Sblood! how you did hurt me! My shoulder really burns!"

"If you would permit me —" said D'Artagnan timidly.

"What, sir?"

"I have a miraculous balsam for wounds — a balsam given to me by my mother, and of which I have made a trial upon myself."

"Well?"

"Well, I am sure that in less than three days this balsam would cure you; and at the end of three days, when you would be cured, — well, sir, it would still do me a great honor to be your man."

D'Artagnan spoke these words with a simplicity that did honor to his courtesy, without casting the least doubt upon his courage.

"By God, sir!" said Athos, "that's a proposition which pleases me; not that I accept it, but it smacks of the gentleman a league away. So spoke the gallant knights of the time of Charlemagne, in whom every knight ought to seek his model. Unfortunately, we do not live in the time of the great emperor. We live in the times of the cardinal, and three days hence, however well the secret might be guarded, it would be known, I say, that we were to fight, and our combat would be forestalled. Will these idlers never come?"

"If you are in a hurry, sir," said D'Artagnan, with the same simplicity with which a moment before he had proposed

to put off the duel for three days, "if you are in a hurry, and if it be your will to despatch me at once, do not inconvenience yourself, I beg of you."

"Well, that is again well said," cried Athos, nodding graciously to D'Artagnan; "that did not come from a man without brains, and certainly not from a man without a heart. Sir, I love men of your kidney, and I foresee plainly that, if we don't kill each other, I shall hereafter take real pleasure in your conversation. We will wait for these gentlemen, if you please; I have plenty of time, and it will be more correct. Ah! here is one of them, I think."

In fact, at the end of the Rue Vaugirard the gigantic form of Porthos began to loom.

"What!" cried D'Artagnan, "is your first second M. Porthos?"

"Yes. Does that displease you?"

"Oh, not at all."

"And here comes the other."

D'Artagnan turned in the direction pointed to by Athos, and perceived Aramis.

"What!" cried he, with an accent of greater astonishment than before, "is your second witness M. Aramis?"

"Doubtless he is. Are you not aware that we are never seen one without the others, and that we are called in the musketeers and the guards, at court and in the city, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, or the Three Inseparables? And yet, as you come from Dax or Pau —"

"From Tarbes," said D'Artagnan.

"It is probable you are ignorant of this circumstance," said Athos.

"'Pon my word!" replied D'Artagnan, "you are well named, gentlemen, and my adventure, if it should make any noise, will prove at least that your union is not founded upon contrasts."

In the meantime Porthos had come up, waved his hand to Athos, and then turning towards D'Artagnan stopped astonished.

Permit us to say, in passing, that he had changed his baldric and laid aside his cloak.

"Ah, ah!" said he, "what does this mean?"

"This is the gentleman I am going to fight with," said Athos, pointing to D'Artagnan with his hand, and saluting him with the same gesture.

"Why, it is with him I am also going to fight," said Porthos.

"But not before one o'clock," replied D'Artagnan.

"Well, and I also am going to fight with that gentleman," said Aramis, coming up in his turn.

"But not till two o'clock," said D'Artagnan with the same calmness.

"But what are you going to fight about, Athos?" asked Aramis.

"'Pon my word, I don't very well know; he hurt my shoulder. And you, Porthos?"

"'Pon my word, I am going to fight because I am going to fight," answered Porthos, coloring deeply.

Athos, whose keen eye lost nothing, perceived a sly smile pass over the lips of the young Gascon, as he replied:

"We had a short discussion upon dress."

"And you, Aramis?" asked Athos.

"Oh, ours is a theological quarrel," replied Aramis, making a sign to D'Artagnan to keep secret the cause of their dispute.

Athos saw a second smile on the lips of D'Artagnan.

"Indeed?" said Athos.

"Yes; a passage of St. Augustine, upon which we could not agree," said the Gascon.

"By Jove! this is a clever fellow," murmured Athos.

"And now you are all assembled, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "permit me to offer you my excuses."

At this word *excuses* a cloud passed over the brow of Athos, a haughty smile curled the lip of Porthos, and a negative sign was the reply of Aramis.

"You do not understand me, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, throwing up his head, on which was playing at that moment a ray of sunlight, gilding its clear and bold outlines. "I ask to be excused in case I should not be able to discharge my debt to all three; for M. Athos has the right to kill me first, which must much diminish the face-value of your bill, M. Porthos, and render yours almost worthless, M. Aramis. And now, gentlemen, I repeat, excuse me, but on that account only, and —on guard!"

At these words, with the most gallant air possible, D'Artagnan drew his sword.

The blood had mounted to the head of D'Artagnan, and at that moment he would have drawn his sword against all the musketeers in the kingdom as willingly as he now did against Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

It was a quarter past twelve. The sun was in its zenith,

and the spot chosen for the theatre of the duel was exposed to its full power.

"It is very hot," said Athos, drawing his sword in his turn, "and yet I cannot take off my doublet; for only just now I felt my wound begin to bleed again, and I should not like to annoy the gentleman with the sight of blood which he has not drawn from me himself."

"That is true, sir," replied D'Artagnan, "and, whether drawn by myself or another, I assure you I shall always view with regret the blood of so brave a man; I will therefore fight in my doublet, as you do."

"Come, come, enough of such compliments," cried Porthos; "please remember we are waiting our turn."

"Speak for yourself, when you are inclined to utter such incongruities," interrupted Aramis. "For my part, I think what they say is very well said, and quite worthy of two gentlemen."

"When you please, sir," said Athos, putting himself on guard.

"I was awaiting your order," said D'Artagnan, crossing swords.

But scarcely had the two rapiers clashed on meeting, when a company of the guards of his Eminence, commanded by M. de Jussac, turned the angle of the convent.

"The cardinal's guards! the cardinal's guards!" cried Aramis and Porthos at the same time. "Sheathe swords, gentlemen! sheathe swords!"

But it was too late. The two combatants had been seen in a position which left no doubt of their intentions.

"Halloo!" cried Jussac, advancing towards them, and making a sign to his men to do the same; "halloo, musketeers! fighting here, then, are you? And the edicts, what has become of them?"

"You are very generous, gentlemen of the guards," said Athos, with acrimony, for Jussac was one of the aggressors of the preceding day. "If we were to see you fighting, I can assure you that we would make no effort to prevent you. Leave us alone, then, and you will enjoy a little amusement without cost to yourselves."

"Gentlemen," said Jussac, "I greatly regret to declare the thing impossible. Duty before everything. Sheathe, then, if you please, and follow us."

"Sir," said Aramis, parodying Jussac, "it would afford us great pleasure to obey your polite invitation, if it depended upon

ourselves; but unfortunately the thing is impossible: M. de Tréville has forbidden it. Pass on your way, then; it is the best thing you can do."

This raillery exasperated Jussac.

"We will charge upon you, then," said he, "if you disobey."

"There are five of them," said Athos, half aloud, "and we are but three. We shall be beaten again, and must die on the spot, for, I swear it, I will never appear before the captain again as a conquered man."

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis instantly closed in, and Jussac drew up his soldiers.

This short interval was sufficient to determine D'Artagnan. It was one of those events which decide the life of a man. It was a choice between the king and the cardinal. The choice made, it must be persisted in. To fight was to disobey the law, to risk his head, to make at once an enemy of a minister more powerful than the king himself; all this the young man perceived, and yet, to his praise be it said, he did not hesitate a second. Turning towards Athos and his friends, —

"Gentlemen," said he, "allow me to correct your words, if you please. You said you were but three, but it appears to me we are four."

"But you are not one of us," said Porthos.

"That's true," replied D'Artagnan; "I do not wear the uniform, but I am with you in spirit. My heart is that of a musketeer. I feel it, sir, and that urges me on."

"Withdraw, young man," cried Jussac, who, doubtless, by his gestures and the expression of his countenance, had guessed D'Artagnan's design. "You may retire, we allow you to do so. Save your skin; begone quickly."

D'Artagnan did not move.

"Well, you are a real good fellow," said Athos, pressing the young man's hand.

"Come, come, decide one way or the other," replied Jussac.

"Well," said Porthos to Aramis, "we must do something."

"You are very generous," said Athos.

But all three were thinking of the youthfulness of D'Artagnan, and dreaded his inexperience.

"We would be only three, one of whom is wounded, with the addition of a boy," resumed Athos, "and yet they will say none the less that we were four men."

"Yes, but to yield!" said Porthos.

"That's rather difficult," replied Athos.

D'Artagnan understood their hesitancy.

"Try me, gentlemen," said he, "and I swear to you by my honor that I will not go hence if we are conquered."

"What is your name, my brave fellow?" said Athos.

"D'Artagnan, sir."

"Well, then! Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan, forward!" cried Athos.

"Come, gentlemen, have you made your minds up?" cried Jussac, for the third time.

"It is done, gentlemen," said Athos.

"And what do you mean to do?" asked Jussac.

"We are about to have the honor of charging you," replied Aramis, lifting his hat with one hand and drawing his sword with the other.

"Oh! you resist, do you!" cried Jussac.

"'Sblood! does that astonish you?"

And the nine combatants rushed at one another with a madness which, however, did not exclude a certain amount of method.

Athos fixed upon Cahusac, a favorite of the cardinal's, Porthos had Bicarat, and Aramis found himself opposed to two adversaries. As to D'Artagnan, he sprang towards Jussac himself.

The heart of the young Gascon beat as though it would burst its fetters, not from fear, God be thanked, — he had not the shade of it, — but with emulation. He fought like a mad tiger, turning ten times round his adversary, and changing his ground and his guard twenty times. Jussac was, as they said then, fond of the sword, and had had much practice; nevertheless, it required all his skill to defend himself against an adversary who, active and energetic, departed every instant from received rules, attacking him on all sides at once, and yet parrying like a man who had the greatest respect for his own epidermis.

This contest at length exhausted Jussac's patience. Furious at being held in check by one whom he had considered a boy, he grew angry and began to make mistakes. D'Artagnan, who, though wanting in practice, had a profound theory, redoubled his agility. Jussac, anxious to put an end to this, springing forward, aimed a terrible thrust at his adversary, but the latter parried it; and, while Jussac was recovering himself, glided like a serpent beneath his blade, and passed his sword through his body. Jussac fell in a heap.

D'Artagnan then cast an anxious and rapid glance over the field of battle.

Aramis had already killed one of his adversaries, but the other was pressing him warmly. Nevertheless, Aramis was in a good situation, and still able to defend himself.

Bicarat and Porthos had just made counter hits. Porthos had received a thrust through his arm, and Bicarat one through his thigh. But neither of the wounds was serious, and they only fought the more earnestly for them.

Athos, wounded again by Cahusac, was steadily growing paler, but did not give way a foot; he had only changed his sword-hand, and was fighting with his left.

According to the laws of duelling at that period, D'Artagnan was at liberty to assist the one he pleased. While he was trying to find out which of his companions needed his aid, he caught a glance from Athos. This glance was of sublime eloquence. Athos would have died rather than appeal for help; but he could look, and with that look ask assistance. D'Artagnan interpreted it; with a terrible bound, he sprang to the side of Cahusac, crying:

"To me, sir Guard! or I will slay you!"

Cahusac turned. It was time, for Athos, whose great courage alone supported him, sank upon his knee.

"'Sblood!" cried he to D'Artagnan, "do not kill him, young man, I beg of you. I have an old affair to settle with him, when I am healed and sound again. Disarm him only—make sure of his sword. That's it! that's it! well done! very well done!"

This exclamation was drawn from Athos by seeing the sword of Cahusac fly twenty paces from him. D'Artagnan and Cahusac sprang forward at the same instant, the one to recover, the other to obtain, the sword; but D'Artagnan being the more active reached it first, and placed his foot upon it.

Cahusac immediately ran to the guardsman whom Aramis had killed, seized his rapier, and returned towards D'Artagnan, but on his way he met Athos, who, during the momentary relief which D'Artagnan had procured for him, had recovered his breath, and who, for fear that D'Artagnan should kill his own personal enemy, wished to resume the fight.

D'Artagnan perceived that it would be disobliging Athos not to leave him alone; and in a few minutes Cahusac fell, with a sword-thrust through his throat.

At the same instant Aramis placed his sword-point on the breast of his fallen enemy and compelled him to ask for mercy.

Only Porthos and Bicarat remained. Porthos was boasting

"TO ME, SIR GUARD, OR I WILL SLAY YOU!"—p. 50.

merrily, asking Bicarat what o'clock it could be, and offering him his compliments upon his brother having just obtained a company in the regiment of Navarre; but, joke as he might, he gained no advantage — Bicarat was one of those iron men who never fall dead.

Nevertheless, it was necessary to put an end to the affair. The watch might come up, and take all the combatants, wounded or not, royalists or cardinalists. Athos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan surrounded Bicarat, and summoned him to surrender. Though alone against all, and with a wound in his thigh, Bicarat wished to hold out; but Jussac, who had risen upon his elbow, cried out to him to yield. Bicarat was a Gascon, as D'Artagnan was; he turned a deaf ear, and contented himself with laughing; and, between two parries, finding time to point to a spot of earth with his sword, —

"Here," cried he, parodying a verse of the Bible, "here will Bicarat die, the only one of those who are with him!"

"But there are four against you; leave off, I command you."

"Ah! if you command me, that's another thing," said Bicarat; "you being my sergeant, it is my duty to obey."

And, springing backward, he broke his sword across his knee, to avoid the necessity of surrendering it, threw the pieces over the convent wall, and crossed his arms, whistling a cardinalist air.

Bravery is always respected, even in an enemy. The musketeers saluted Bicarat with their swords, and returned them to their sheaths. D'Artagnan did the same; then assisted by Bicarat, the only one left standing, he bore Jussac, Cahusac, and that one of Aramis's adversaries who was only wounded, under the porch of the convent. The fourth, as we have said, was dead. They then rang the bell, and, carrying away four swords out of five, they took their road, intoxicated with joy, towards the hôtel of M. de Tréville.

They walked arm in arm, occupying the whole width of the street, and accosting every musketeer they met, so that in the end it became a triumphal march. The heart of D'Artagnan throbbed with wild delight; he walked between Athos and Porthos, pressing them tenderly.

"If I am not yet a musketeer," said he to his new friends, as he passed through the gateway of M. de Tréville's hôtel, "at least I have entered upon my apprenticeship, haven't I?"

CHAPTER VI.

HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIII.

This affair made a great noise. M. de Tréville scolded his musketeers in public, and congratulated them in private; but as no time was to be lost in gaining the king, M. de Tréville made all haste to the Louvre. But he was too late; the king was closeted with the cardinal, and M. de Tréville was informed that the king was busy and could not receive him. In the evening, M. de Tréville went to the king's card-table. The king was winning, and as his Majesty was very avaricious he was in an excellent humor; therefore, perceiving M. de Tréville at a distance, —

"Come here, captain," said he, "come here, that I may scold you. Do you know that his Eminence has just made fresh complaints against your musketeers, and with so much emotion that his Eminence is indisposed this evening? Why, these musketeers of yours are very devils — fellows to be hanged!"

"No, sire," replied Tréville, who saw at the first glance which way things would turn, "no, sire, on the contrary, they are good creatures, as meek as lambs, and have but one desire, I'll be their warranty; and this is, that their swords may never leave their scabbards but in your Majesty's service. But what are they to do? The guards of the cardinal are forever seeking quarrels with them, and for the honor of the corps, even, the poor young men are obliged to defend themselves."

"Listen to M. de Tréville," said the king, "listen to him! would not one say he was speaking of a religious community! In truth, my dear captain, I have a great mind to take away your commission, and give it to Mademoiselle de Chemerault, to whom I promised an abbey. But don't fancy that I am going to take you on your bare word; I am called Louis the Just, Monsieur de Tréville, and by and by, by and by we will see."

"Ah! it is because I rely fully upon that justice that I shall wait patiently and quietly your Majesty's good pleasure."

"Wait, then, sir, wait," said the king; "I will not make you wait long."

In fact, fortune changed, and as the king began to lose what he had won, he was not sorry to find an excuse for playing Charlemagne, if we may be excused for using this gambling

term, of the origin of which we confess we are ignorant. The king then arose a minute after, and putting the money which lay before him into his pocket, the major part of which arose from his winnings, —

"La Vieuville," said he, "take my place; I must speak to M. de Tréville on an affair of importance. Ah, I had eighty louis before me; put down the same sum, so that they who have lost may have nothing to complain of, — justice before every thing." Then turning towards M. de Tréville, and walking with him towards the embrasure of a window, —

"Well, monsieur," continued he, "you say it is his Eminence's guards who sought a quarrel with your musketeers?"

"Yes, sire, as they always do."

"And how did the thing happen? let us see, for you know, my dear captain, a judge must hear both sides."

"Good Lord! in the most simple and natural manner possible. Three of my best soldiers, whom your Majesty knows by name, and whose devotion you have more than once appreciated, and who have, I can assure the king, his service much at heart, — three of my best soldiers, I say, — Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, — had made a party of pleasure with a young cadet from Gascony, whom I had introduced to them the same morning. The party was to take place at St. Germain, I believe, and they had appointed to meet at the Carmes Deschaux, when they were disturbed by De Jussac, Cahusac, Bicarat, and two other guards, who certainly did not go there in a body without some ill intention against the edicts."

"Ah, ah! you incline me to think so," said the king; "there is no doubt they went thither with the intention of fighting."

"I do not accuse them, sire; but I leave your Majesty to judge what five armed men could possibly be going to do in such a retired spot as the environs of the Convent des Carmes."

"You are right, Tréville, you are right!"

"Then, upon seeing my musketeers, they changed their minds, and forgot their private hatred for their corps feuds; for your Majesty cannot be ignorant that the musketeers, who belong to the king, and to nobody but the king, are the natural enemies of the guards, who belong to the cardinal."

"Yes, Tréville, yes!" said the king, in a melancholy tone; "and it is very sad, believe me, to see thus two parties in France, two heads to royalty. But all this will come to an end, Tréville, will come to an end. You say, then, that the guards sought a quarrel with the musketeers?"

"I say that it is probable that things did happen thus, but I will not swear to it, sire. You know how difficult it is to discover the truth; and unless a man be endowed with that admirable instinct which causes Louis XIII. to be termed the Just —"

"You are right, Tréville; but they were not alone, your musketeers, — they had a youth with them?"

"Yes, sire, and one wounded man; so that three of the king's musketeers — one of whom was wounded — and a youth not only maintained their ground against five of the most terrible of his Eminence's guards, but absolutely brought four of them to the earth."

"Why, this is a victory!" cried the king, glowing with delight, "a complete victory!"

"Yes, sire; as complete as that of the bridge of Cè."

"Four men, one of them wounded, and a youth, say you?"

"One scarcely a grown man; but who, however, behaved himself so admirably on this occasion that I will take the liberty of recommending him to your Majesty."

"What is his name?"

"D'Artagnan, sire; he is the son of one of my oldest friends — the son of a man who served under your father of glorious memory, in the civil war."

"And you say that this young man behaved himself well? Tell me how, De Tréville, — you know how I delight in accounts of war and fights."

And Louis XIII. twirled his moustache proudly, and placed his hand upon his hip.

"Sire," resumed Tréville, "as I told you, M. d'Artagnan is little more than a boy, and as he has not the honor of being a musketeer, he was dressed as a private citizen; the guards of the cardinal, perceiving his youth, and still more that he did not belong to the corps, urged him to retire before they made the attack."

"So you may plainly see, Tréville," interrupted the king, "it was they who attacked?"

"That is true, sire; there can be no more doubt on that head. They called upon him then to retire, but he answered that he was a musketeer at heart, entirely devoted to your Majesty, and that he would therefore remain with the musketeers."

"Brave young man!" murmured the king.

"Well, he did remain with them; and your Majesty has in him so firm a champion that it was he who gave Jussac

the terrible sword-thrust which has made the cardinal so angry."

"He who wounded Jussac!" cried the king; "he, a boy! Tréville, that's impossible!"

"It is as I have the honor to relate it to your Majesty."

"Jussac, one of the first swordsmen in the kingdom?"

"Well, sire, for once he found his master."

"I should like to see this young man, Tréville,—I should like to see him; and if anything can be done—well, we will make it our business to do it."

"When will your Majesty deign to receive him?"

"To-morrow at mid-day, Tréville."

"Shall I bring him alone?"

"No; bring me all four together; I wish to thank them all at once. Devoted men are so rare, Tréville, we must recompense devotion."

"At twelve o'clock, sire, we will be at the Louvre."

"Ah! by the back staircase, Tréville, by the back staircase; it is useless to let the cardinal know."

"Yes, sire."

"You understand, Tréville; an edict is still an edict—it is forbidden to fight, after all."

"But this encounter, sire, is quite out of the ordinary conditions of a duel; it is a brawl, and the proof is that there were five of the cardinal's guards against my three musketeers and M. d'Artagnan."

"That is true," said the king; "but never mind, Tréville, come any way by the back staircase."

Tréville smiled. But as it was already something to have prevailed upon this child to rebel against his master, he saluted the king respectfully, and, with this agreement, took leave of him.

That evening the three musketeers were informed of the honor which was bestowed upon them. As they had long been acquainted with the king, they were not much excited by the circumstance; but D'Artagnan, with his Gascon imagination, saw in it his future fortune, and passed the night in golden dreams. As early, then, as eight o'clock he was at the apartment of Athos.

D'Artagnan found the musketeer dressed and ready to go out. As the hour to wait upon the king was not till twelve, he had made a party with Porthos and Aramis to play a game at tennis, in a tennis-court situated near the stables of the Luxembourg. Athos invited D'Artagnan to follow them;

and, although ignorant of the game, which he had never played, he accepted the invitation, not knowing what to do with his time till twelve o'clock, as it was then scarcely nine.

The two musketeers were already there, and were playing together. Athos, who was very expert in all bodily exercises, went over with D'Artagnan to the opposite side, and challenged them; but at the first effort he made, although he played with his left hand, he found that his wound was yet too recent to allow of such exertion. D'Artagnan remained, therefore, alone; as he declared he was too ignorant of the game to play it regularly, they only continued giving balls to each other, without counting; but one of these balls, launched by Porthos's herculean hand, passed so close to D'Artagnan's face that he thought if, instead of passing near, it had hit him, his audience would have been probably lost, as it would have been impossible for him to have presented himself before the king. Now, as upon this audience, in his Gascon imagination, depended his future life, he saluted Aramis and Porthos politely, declaring that he would not resume the game until he should be prepared to play with them on more equal terms; and he went and took his place near the rope and in the gallery.

Unfortunately for D'Artagnan, among the spectators was one of his Eminence's guards, who, still irritated by the defeat of his companions, which had happened only the day before, had promised himself to seize the first opportunity of avenging it. He believed this opportunity was now come, and addressing his neighbor, —

"It is not astonishing," said he, "that that young man should be afraid of a ball; he is doubtless a musketeer apprentice."

D'Artagnan turned round as if a serpent had stung him, and fixed his eyes intently upon the guard who had just made this insolent speech.

"Zounds!" resumed the latter, twirling his moustache, "look at me as long as you like, my little gentleman; what I have said, I have said."

"And as since that which you have said is too clear to require any explanation," replied D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "I beg you will follow me."

"And when?" asked the guard, with the same jeering air.

"Immediately, if you please."

"And you know who I am, without doubt?"

"I! no, I assure you I do not know you; nor have I any desire to do so."

"You're in the wrong there; for if you knew my name, perhaps you would not be in such a hurry."

"What is your name, then?"

"Bernajoux, at your service."

"Well, then, Monsieur Bernajoux," said D'Artagnan, quietly, "I will wait for you at the door."

"Go on, sir; I will follow you."

"Do not appear to be in a hurry, sir, so as to cause it to be observed that we go out together; you must be aware that for that which we have in hand company would be inconvenient."

"That's true," said the guard, astonished that his name had not produced more effect upon the young man.

In fact, the name of Bernajoux was known to everybody, D'Artagnan alone excepted, perhaps; for it was one of those which figured most frequently in the daily brawls which all the edicts of the king and cardinal had not been able to repress.

Porthos and Aramis were so engaged with their game, and Athos was watching them with so much attention, that they did not even see their young companion go out, who stopped outside the door, as he had told his Eminence's guard he would do. An instant after, the guard descended. As D'Artagnan had no time to lose, on account of his audience with the king, which was fixed for mid-day, he cast his eyes around, and seeing that the street was empty, —

"Upon my word!" said he to his adversary, "it is fortunate for you, although your name is Bernajoux, that you have only to deal with an apprentice musketeer; never mind, be content, I will do my best. On guard!"

"But," said he whom D'Artagnan thus provoked, "it appears to me that this place is very ill-chosen, and that behind the Abbey St. Germain or in the Pré-aux-Clercs would be better."

"What you say is very sensible," replied D'Artagnan; "but unfortunately I have very little time to spare, having an appointment at twelve precisely. On guard, then, sir, on guard!"

Bernajoux was not a man to have such a compliment paid to him twice. In an instant his sword glittered in his hand, and he sprang upon his adversary, whom, on account of his youth, he hoped to intimidate.

But D'Artagnan had on the preceding day gone through

his apprenticeship. Whetted by his victory, full of the hope of future favor, he was resolved not to yield an inch; so the two swords were crossed close to the hilts, and as D'Artagnan stood firm, it was his adversary who made the retreating step; but D'Artagnan seized the moment at which, in this movement, the sword of Bernajoux deviated from the line; he freed his weapon, made a lunge, and touched his adversary on the shoulder. D'Artagnan immediately made a step backwards and raised his sword; but Bernajoux cried out that it was nothing, and rushing blindly upon him, absolutely spitted himself upon D'Artagnan's sword. As, however, he did not fall, and as he did not declare himself conquered, but only rushed away towards the hôtel of M. de Trémouille, in whose service he had a relative, D'Artagnan was ignorant of the seriousness of the last wound his adversary had received, followed him closely, and without doubt would soon have completed his work with a third blow, when the noise which arose from the street being heard in the tennis-court, two of the friends of the guard, who had seen him go out after exchanging some words with D'Artagnan, rushed, sword in hand, from the court, and fell upon the conqueror. But Athos, Porthos, and Aramis quickly appeared in their turn, and the moment the two guards attacked their young companion, drove them back. Bernajoux now fell, and as the guards were only two against four, they began to cry, "To the rescue! the hôtel de Trémouille!" At these cries, all who were in the hôtel rushed out, falling upon the four companions, who, on their part, cried aloud, "To the rescue, musketeers!"

This cry was usually heeded; for the musketeers were known to be enemies to the cardinal, and were beloved on account of the hatred they bore to his Eminence. Consequently the guards of other companies than those which belonged to the Red Duke, as Aramis had called him, generally in these quarrels took part with the king's musketeers. Of the three guardsmen of M. des Essarts's company who were passing, two came to the assistance of the four companions, while the other ran towards the hôtel of M. de Tréville, crying: "To the rescue! Musketeers! to the rescue!" As usual, this hôtel was full of soldiers of this corps, who hastened to the assistance of their comrades; the *mêlée* became general, but strength was on the side of the musketeers; the cardinal's guards and M. de la Trémouille's people retreated into the hôtel, the doors of which they closed just in time to prevent their enemies from entering with them. As to the wounded man, he had

been taken in at once, and as we have said, in a very bad condition.

Excitement was at its height among the musketeers and their allies, and they were already considering whether or not they should set fire to the hôtel to punish the insolence of M. de la Trémouille's domestics in daring to make a *sortie* upon the king's musketeers. The proposition had been made, and received with enthusiasm, when fortunately eleven o'clock struck; D'Artagnan and his companions remembered their audience, and as they would very much have regretted that such a feat should be performed without them, they succeeded in quieting their coadjutors. The latter contented themselves with hurling some paving stones against the gates, but the gates were too strong; they then grew tired of the sport; besides, those who must be considered as the leaders of the enterprise had quitted the group and were making their way towards the hôtel of M. de Tréville, who was waiting for them, having been already informed of this fresh disturbance.

"Quick to the Louvre," said he, "to the Louvre without losing an instant, and let us endeavor to see the king before he is prejudiced by the cardinal; we will describe the thing to him as a consequence of the affair of yesterday, and the two will pass off together."

M. de Tréville, accompanied by his four young men, directed his course toward the Louvre; but to the great astonishment of the captain of the musketeers, he was informed that the king was gone stag-hunting in the forest of St. Germain. M. de Tréville required this intelligence to be repeated to him twice, and each time his companions saw his brow become darker.

"Had his Majesty," asked he, "any intention of holding this hunting party yesterday?"

"No, your Excellency," replied the valet, "the master of the hounds came this morning to inform him that last night he had started a stag. He at first answered that he would not go, but could not resist his love of sport, and set out after dinner."

"Has the king seen the cardinal?" asked M. de Tréville.

"Most probably he has," replied the valet, "for I saw the horses harnessed to his Eminence's carriage this morning, and when I asked where he was going, I was told to 'St. Germain.'"

"He has gotten ahead of us," said M. de Tréville. "Gentlemen, I will see the king this evening; but as to you, I do not advise you to risk doing so."

This advice was too reasonable, and, moreover, came from a man who knew the king too well, that the four young men did not attempt to dispute it. M. de Tréville recommended them each to retire to his apartment, and wait for news from him.

On entering his hôtel, M. de Tréville thought it best to be first in making the complaint. He sent one of his servants to M. de la Trémouille with a letter, in which he begged of him to eject the cardinal's guard from his house, and to reprimand his people for their audacity in making *sortie* against the king's musketeers. But M. de la Trémouille, already prejudiced by his esquire, whose relative we already know Bernajoux to be, replied that it was neither for M. de Tréville nor the musketeers to complain, but on the contrary for him, whose people the musketeers had assaulted and whose hôtel they had endeavored to burn. Now, as the debate between these two nobles might last a long time, each becoming, naturally, more firm in his own opinion, M. de Tréville thought of an expedient which might terminate it quietly; which was to go himself to M. de la Trémouille.

He repaired, then, immediately to his hôtel, and caused himself to be announced.

The two nobles saluted each other politely, for if no friendship existed between them, there was at least esteem. Both were men of courage and honor; and as M. de la Trémouille, a Protestant and seeing the king seldom, was of no party, he did not, in general, carry any partisan feeling into his social relations. This time, however, his greeting, though polite, was colder than usual.

"Sir!" said M. de Tréville, "we fancy that we have each cause to complain of the other, and I am come to endeavor to clear up this affair."

"I have no objection," replied M. de la Trémouille, "but I warn you that I have inquired well into it, and all the fault lies with your musketeers."

"You are too just and reasonable a man, sir," said De Tréville, "not to accept the proposition I am about to make to you."

"Make it, sir. I am attentive."

"How is M. Bernajoux, your esquire's relative?"

"Why, sir, very ill indeed! In addition to the sword-thrust in his arm, which is not dangerous, he has received another right through his lungs, of which the doctor speaks very unfavorably."

"But is the wounded man sensible?"

"Perfectly."

"Can he speak?"

"With difficulty, but he can speak."

"Well, sir, let us go to him; let us adjure him, in the name of the God before whom he is called upon, perhaps quickly, to appear, to speak the truth. I will take him for judge in his own cause, sir, and will believe what he will say."

M. de la Trémouille reflected for an instant, then, as it was difficult to make a more reasonable proposition, agreed to it.

Both descended to the chamber in which the wounded man lay. The latter, on seeing these two noble lords enter his room, endeavored to raise himself up in his bed, but he was too weak, and, exhausted by the effort, he fell back again almost insensible.

M. de la Trémouille approached him, and made him inhale some salts, which restored him to consciousness. Then M. de Tréville, unwilling to be accused of having influenced the wounded man, requested M. de la Trémouille to question him, himself.

What M. de Tréville had foreseen happened. Placed between life and death, as Bernajoux was, he had no idea for a moment of concealing the truth; and he described to the two nobles the affair exactly as it had taken place.

This was all that M. de Tréville wanted; he wished Bernajoux a speedy recovery, took leave of M. de la Trémouille, returned to his hôtel, and immediately sent word to the four friends that he awaited their company at dinner.

M. de Tréville received very good company, quite anti-cardinalist, though. It may easily be understood, therefore, that the conversation, during the whole of dinner, turned upon the two checks that his Eminence's guards had just received. Now, as D'Artagnan had been the hero of these two fights, all the felicitations fell to his share, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis surrendering them all to him; not only as good comrades, but as men who had so often had their turn that they could very well afford to let him have his.

Toward six o'clock, M. de Tréville announced that it was his hour to go to the Louvre; but as the hour of audience granted by his Majesty was past, instead of claiming the *entrée* by the back stairs, he placed himself with the four young men in the ante-chamber. The king had not yet returned from hunting. Our young men had been waiting barely half an hour among the crowd of courtiers, when all the doors were thrown open, and his Majesty was announced.

At this announcement, D'Artagnan felt himself tremble to the very marrow of his bones. The instant which was about to follow would, in all probability, decide his future life. His eyes, therefore, were fixed in an agonized gaze upon the door through which the king would pass.

Louis XIII. appeared, walking in front; he was in hunting costume covered with dust, wearing large boots, and had a whip in his hand. At the first glance, D'Artagnan perceived that the king was in a bad humor.

This disposition, visible as it was in his Majesty, did not prevent the courtiers from ranging themselves in view of him as he passed. In royal ante-chambers, it is better to be looked upon with an angry eye than not to be looked upon at all. The three musketeers, therefore, did not hesitate to make a step forward; D'Artagnan, on the contrary, remained concealed behind them; but although the king knew Athos, Porthos, and Aramis personally, he passed in front of them without speaking or looking — indeed, as if he had never seen them before. As for M. de Tréville, when the king's eyes fell for an instant upon him, he bore his glance with such equanimity that it was the king who looked away; after which his Majesty, grumbling, entered his apartment.

"Matters go but badly," said Athos, smiling; "and we shall not be made knights of the order this time."

"Wait here ten minutes," said M. de Tréville; "and if, at the expiration of ten minutes, you do not see me come out, return to my hôtel, for it will be useless for you to wait for me longer."

The four young men waited ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes; and, seeing that M. de Tréville did not return, went away very uneasy as to what was going to happen.

M. de Tréville entered the king's closet boldly, and found his Majesty in a very ill humor, seated in an armchair, beating his boot with the handle of his whip. This, however, did not prevent his asking, with the greatest coolness, after his Majesty's health.

"Bad, sir, — bad! I am bored."

This was, in fact, the worst malady of Louis XIII., who would sometimes take one of his courtiers to a window, and say, "Mr. So-and-so, let us be bored together."

"What! Your Majesty is bored! Have you not enjoyed the fine hunting to-day?"

"Fine hunting, indeed, sir! Upon my soul, everything

degenerates; and I don't know whether it is the game leaves no scent, or the dogs that have no noses. We started a stag of ten branches; we chased him for six hours, and when he was near being taken, — when St. Simon was already putting his horn to his mouth to sound the mort, — crack, all the pack takes the wrong scent, and sets off after a yearling. I shall be obliged to give up hunting, as I have given up hawking. Ah! I am an unfortunate king, Monsieur de Tréville! I had but one gerfalcon, and he died the day before yesterday."

"Indeed, sire, I comprehend your vexation perfectly; it is a misfortune, but I think you have still a good number of falcons, sparrow-hawks, and tiercels."

"And not a man to instruct them. Falconers are dying out; I know no one but myself who is acquainted with the noble art of venery. After me it will be all over, and people will hunt with traps, snares, and deadfalls. If I had only the time to form pupils! but there is the cardinal always at hand, who does not leave me a moment's repose; who talks to me perpetually about Spain, about Austria, about England! Ah! *à propos* of the cardinal, Monsieur de Tréville, I am vexed with you."

This was what M. de Tréville was waiting for. He knew the king of old, and he knew that all these complaints were but a preface, — a kind of excitation to encourage himself, — and that he had now come to his point at last.

"And in what have I been so unfortunate as to displease your Majesty?" asked M. de Tréville, feigning the most profound astonishment.

"Is it thus you perform your office, sir?" continued the king, without directly replying to De Tréville's question; "is it for this I named you captain of my musketeers, that they should assassinate a man, disturb a whole quarter, and endeavor to set fire to Paris, without your saying a word? But yet," continued the king, "without doubt, I am too hasty in accusing you; without doubt the rioters are in prison, and you come to tell me justice is done."

"Sire," replied M. de Tréville, calmly, "on the contrary I come to demand it of you."

"And against whom, pray?" cried the king.

"Against calumniators," said M. de Tréville.

"Ah! this is something new," replied the king. "Will you, tell me that your three damned musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and your cadet from Béarn, have not fallen, like so many furies, upon poor Bernajoux, and have not maltreated

him in such a fashion that probably by this time he is at the point of death? Will you tell me that they did not lay siege to the hôtel of the Duc de la Trémouille, and that they did not endeavor to burn it? — which would not, perhaps, have been a great misfortune in time of war, seeing that it is nothing but a nest of Huguenots; but which is, in time of peace, a sorry example. Tell me, now, can you deny all this?"

"And who has told you this fine story, sire?" asked De Tréville, quietly.

"Who has told me this fine story, sir? Who should it be but he who watches while I sleep, who labors while I amuse myself, who directs everything at home and abroad — in Europe as well as in France?"

"Your Majesty must be speaking of God without doubt," said M. de Tréville; "for I know no one but God who can be so far above your Majesty."

"No, sir; I speak of the prop of the state — of my only servant — of my only friend — of the cardinal."

"His Eminence is not his Holiness, sire."

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"That it is the Pope alone who is infallible, and that this infallibility does not extend to the cardinals."

"You mean that he deceives me — you mean that he betrays me? You accuse him, then? Come, speak, confess frankly that you accuse him!"

"No, sire; but I say that he himself is deceived; I say that he is ill informed; I say that he has hastily accused your Majesty's musketeers, towards whom he is unjust, and that he has not obtained his information from good sources."

"The accusation comes from M. de la Trémouille — from the duke himself. What do you answer to that?"

"I might answer, sire, that he is too deeply interested in the question to be a very impartial witness; but far from that, sire, I know the duke to be a loyal gentleman, and I refer the matter to him, — but upon one condition, sire."

"What is that?"

"It is that your Majesty will make him come here, will question him yourself, face to face, without witnesses, and that I shall see your Majesty as soon as you shall have seen the duke."

"What then! and you will be bound," cried the king, "by what M. de la Trémouille shall say?"

"Yes, sire."

"You will abide by his judgment?"

"Doubtless — I will."

"And you will submit to the reparation he may require?"

"Certainly."

"La Chesnaye," cried the king, "La Chesnaye!"

Louis XIII.'s confidential valet, who never left the door, entered in answer to the summons.

"La Chesnaye," said the king, "let some one go instantly and find M. de la Trémouille; I wish to speak with him this evening."

"Your Majesty gives me your word that you will not see any one after M. de la Trémouille until you see me?"

"Nobody — on the word of a gentleman."

"To-morrow, then, sire?"

"To-morrow, sir."

"At what o'clock may it please your Majesty?"

"At whatsoever time you like."

"But I should be afraid of awakening your Majesty, if I came too early."

"Awaken me! Do you think I ever sleep? I no longer sleep, sir. I sometimes dream, that's all. Come, then, as early as you like — at seven o'clock; but beware, if your musketeers are guilty."

"If my musketeers are guilty, sire, the guilty shall be placed in your Majesty's hands, and you can dispose of them at your good pleasure. Does your Majesty require anything further? Speak, I am ready to obey."

"No, sir, no. To-morrow, then, sir,— to-morrow."

"Till then, God preserve your Majesty."

However poorly the king might sleep, M. de Tréville slept still worse; he had ordered his three musketeers and their companion to be with him at half-past six in the morning. He took them with him, without assuring them or promising them anything, and without concealing from them that their favor, and even his own, depended upon a single throw of the dice.

When they had reached the foot of the back stairs, he desired them to wait. If the king was still irritated against them, they should depart without being seen; if the king consented to see them, they would only have to be called.

On arriving at the king's private ante-chamber, M. de Tréville found La Chesnaye, who informed him that they had not been able to find M. de la Trémouille on the preceding evening at his hôtel, that he had come in too late to present himself at

the Louvre, that he had only just appeared, and that he was then with the king.

This circumstance pleased M. de Tréville much, as he thus became certain that no inimical suggestion could insinuate itself between M. de la Trémouille's deposition and himself.

In fact, ten minutes had scarcely passed away when the door of the king's closet opened, and M. de Tréville saw M. de la Trémouille come out; the duke came straight up to him and said:

"M. de Tréville, his Majesty has just sent for me in order to inquire into the circumstances which took place yesterday at my hôtel. I have told him the truth, that is to say, that the fault lay with my people, and that I was ready to offer you my excuses for them. Since I have the good fortune to meet you, I beg you to receive them, and to consider me always as one of your friends."

"Duke," said M. de Tréville, "I was so confident of your loyalty that I did not wish any but you to defend me before his Majesty. I find that I have not been mistaken, and I am gratified to think that there is still one man in France of whom one may say, without being mistaken, what I have said of you."

"That's well said," said the king, who had heard all these compliments through the open door; "only tell him, Tréville, since he wishes to be considered as your friend, that I also wish to be one of his, but he neglects me; that it is nearly three years since I have seen him, and that I never do see him unless I send for him. Tell him all this for me, for these are things which a king cannot say himself."

"Thanks, sire, thanks," said M. de la Trémouille; "but your Majesty may be assured that it is not those — I do not speak of M. de Tréville — that it is not those whom your Majesty sees at all hours of the day who are the most devoted to you."

"Ah! you heard what I said? so much the better, duke, so much the better," said the king, advancing to the door. "Ah! that's you, Tréville. Where are your musketeers? I told you the day before yesterday to bring them with you — why have you not done so?"

"They are below, sire, and with your permission La Chesnaye will tell them to come up."

"Yes, yes, let them come up immediately; it is nearly eight o'clock, and at nine I expect a visit. Go, duke, and return, I beg of you. Come in, Tréville."

The duke bowed and retired. At the moment he opened

the door the three musketeers and D'Artagnan, led by La Chesnaye, appeared at the top of the staircase.

"Come in, my braves," said the king, "come in; I have a scolding for you."

The musketeers advanced, bowing, D'Artagnan following closely behind them.

"How the devil!" continued the king, "seven of his Eminence's guards disabled by you four in two days! That's too many, gentlemen, too many! If you go on so, his Eminence will be obliged to renew his company in three weeks, and I to enforce the edicts to their fullest extent. One, now and then, I don't say much about; but seven in two days, I repeat, it is too many, it is far too many!"

"Therefore, sire, your Majesty sees that they are come quite contrite and repentant to offer you their excuses."

"Quite contrite and repentant! Hem!" said the king, "I place no confidence in their hypocritical faces; in particular, there is one yonder with a Gascon face. Come here, sir."

D'Artagnan, who understood that it was to him this compliment was addressed, approached, assuming a most despondent air.

"Why, you told me he was a young man? This is a boy, Tréville, a mere boy! Do you mean to say that it was he who bestowed that severe thrust upon Jussac?"

"And those two equally fine thrusts upon Bernajoux."

"Truly!"

"Without reckoning," said Athos, "that if he had not rescued me from the hands of Cahusac, I should not now have the honor of making my very humble reverence to your Majesty."

"Why this Béarnais is a very devil! *Ventre-saint-gris!* Monsieur de Tréville, as the king my father would have said. But at this sort of work, many doublets must be slashed and many swords broken. But Gascons are always poor, are they not?"

"Sire, I must say that they have not yet discovered any gold mines in their mountains; though the Lord owes them this miracle in recompense for the manner in which they supported the claims of the king, your father."

"Which means, that the Gascons made a king of me myself, seeing that I am my father's son, does it not, Tréville? Well, in good faith, I don't say nay to it. La Chesnaye, go and see if, by rummaging all my pockets, you can find forty pistoles; and if you find them bring them to me. And now,

let us see, young man, with your hand upon your conscience, how did all this come to pass?"

D'Artagnan related the adventure of the preceding day in all its details: how, not having been able to sleep for the joy he felt in the expectation of seeing his Majesty, he had gone to his three friends three hours before the hour of audience; how they had gone together to the fives-court, and how, when he had manifested fear of receiving a ball in the face, he had been jeered at by Bernajoux, who had nearly paid for his jeer with his life, and M. de la Trémouille, who had nothing to do with the matter, with the loss of his hôtel.

"This is all very well," murmured the king; "yes, this is just the account the duke gave me of the affair. Poor cardinal! seven men in two days, and those of his very best! but that's quite enough, gentlemen; please to understand, that's enough; you have taken your revenge for the Rue Férou, and even exceeded it; you ought to be satisfied."

"If your Majesty is," said Tréville, "we are."

"Oh, yes, I am," added the king, taking a handful of gold from La Chesnaye, and putting it into the hand of D'Artagnan. "Here," said he, "is a proof of my satisfaction."

At this period, the ideas of pride which are in fashion in our days did not prevail. A gentleman received money directly from the king's hand and was not in the least humiliated. D'Artagnan put his forty pistoles into his pocket without any scruple; on the contrary he thanked his Majesty most heartily.

"There," said the king, looking at a clock, "there, now, as it is half-past eight, you may retire; for, as I told you, I expect some one at nine. Thanks for your devotion, gentlemen. I may continue to rely upon it, may I not?"

"Oh, sir!" cried the four companions with one voice, "we would allow ourselves to be cut to pieces in your Majesty's service!"

"Well, well, but keep whole; that will be better, and you will be more useful to me. Tréville," added the king, in a low voice, as the others were retiring, "as you have no room in your musketeers, and as we have besides decided that a novitiate is necessary before entering that corps, place this young man in the company of guards commanded by your brother-in-law, M. des Essarts. Ah! Zounds! I enjoy in advance the face the cardinal will make; he will be furious! but I don't care; I am doing what is right."

And the king waved his hand to Tréville, who left him and

rejoined the musketeers, whom he found sharing the forty pistoles with D'Artagnan.

And the cardinal, as his Majesty had said, was really furious, so furious that for a whole week he absented himself from the king's card-table, which did not prevent the king from being as complacent to him as possible, or whenever he met him from asking in the kindest tone:

"Well, Cardinal, how fares it with that poor Jussac, and that poor Bernajoux of yours?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MUSKETEERS' ESTABLISHMENTS.

When D'Artagnan had left the Louvre, and consulted his friends upon the use he had best make of his share of the forty pistoles, he was advised by Athos to order a good repast at the Pomme-de-Pin, by Porthos to engage a lackey, and by Aramis to provide himself with a suitable mistress.

The repast was carried into effect that very day, and the lackey waited at table. The repast had been ordered by Athos, and the lackey furnished by Porthos. This fellow was a Picard, whom the vain musketeer had picked up, that very day and for this occasion, on the bridge De la Tournelle, while he was spitting in the water to make rings.

Porthos pretended that this occupation was a proof of a reflective and contemplative organization, and he had brought him away without any other recommendation. The noble carriage of that gentleman, for whom he believed himself to be engaged, had seduced Planchet — that was the name of the Picard; he felt a slight disappointment, however, when he saw that the place was already taken by a compeer named Mousqueton, and when Porthos signified to him that the state of his household, though great, would not support two servants, and that he must enter into the service of D'Artagnan. Nevertheless, when he waited at the dinner given by his master, and saw him take out a handful of gold to pay for it, he believed his fortune made, and returned thanks to Heaven for having thrown him into the service of such a Crœsus; he preserved this opinion even after the feast, with the remnants of which he made up for his long abstinences. But when in the evening he made his master's bed, Planchet's chimæras faded away. The bed was the only one in the apartment,

which consisted of an ante-chamber and a bedroom. Planchet slept in the ante-chamber upon a coverlet taken from D'Artagnan's bed and which D'Artagnan from that time made shift to do without.

Athos, on his part, had a valet whom he had trained in his service in a very peculiar fashion, and who was named Grimaud. He was very taciturn, this worthy signor. Be it understood we are speaking of Athos. During the five or six years that he had lived in perfect intimacy with his companions, Porthos and Aramis, they could remember having often seen him smile, but had never heard him laugh. His words were brief and expressive, conveying all that was meant, and no more; no embellishments, no embroidery, no arabesques. His conversation was matter of fact without any ornamentation.

Although Athos was scarcely thirty years old, and possessed of great physical and mental beauty, no one knew that he had ever had a mistress. He never spoke of women. He certainly did not prevent others from speaking of them before him, although it was easy to perceive that this kind of conversation to which he contributed only bitter jests and misanthropic opinions was perfectly disagreeable to him. His reserve, his roughness, and his silence made almost an old man of him; he had then, in order not to interfere with his habits, accustomed Grimaud to obey him upon a simple gesture, or at the mere movement of his lips. He never spoke to him but upon the most extraordinary occasions.

Sometimes Grimaud, who feared his master as he would death, though entertaining for him a strong personal attachment, and a great veneration for his talents, believed he understood perfectly what he wanted, flew to execute the order received, and did precisely the contrary. Athos then shrugged his shoulders, and without flying into a passion, gave Grimaud a good thrashing. On these days he did speak.

Porthos's character, as we have seen, was exactly opposite to that of Athos: he not only talked much, but he talked loudly; little caring, we must do him the justice to say, whether anybody listened to him or not; he talked for the pleasure of talking, and for the pleasure of hearing himself talk; he discussed all subjects except the sciences, alleging as an excuse for this the inveterate hatred he had borne to the learned from his childhood. He had not so noble an air as Athos, and the consciousness of his inferiority in this respect had, at the commencement of their intimacy, often rendered him unjust

towards that gentleman, whom he endeavored to eclipse by his splendid dress. But with his simple musketeer's uniform and nothing but the manner in which he threw back his head and advanced his foot, Athos instantly took the place which was his due, and consigned the ostentatious Porthos to the second rank. Porthos consoled himself by filling the antechamber of M. de Tréville and the guard-room of the Louvre with the accounts of his love affairs, while Athos never spoke of his, and at the present moment, after having passed from the magistracy to the nobility, from the lawyer's dame to the baroness, there was question of nothing less for Porthos than a foreign princess, who was enormously fond of him.

An old proverb says, "Like master, like man." Let us pass then from the valet of Athos to the valet of Porthos, from Grimaud to Mousqueton.

Mousqueton was a Norman, whose pacific name of Boniface his master had changed into the infinitely more sonorous one of Mousqueton. He had entered Porthos's service upon condition that he should only be clothed and lodged, but in a handsome manner; he claimed but two hours a day for himself, to consecrate to an employment which would provide for his other wants. Porthos agreed to the bargain; this arrangement suited him wonderfully well. He had doublets for Mousqueton cut out of his old clothes and cast-off cloaks, and thanks to a very intelligent tailor, who made his clothes look as good as new by turning them, and whose wife was suspected of wishing to make Porthos come down from his aristocratic habits, Mousqueton made a very good figure when attending on his master.

As for Aramis, whose character we believe we have sufficiently explained, a character, moreover, which, like that of his companions, we shall be able to follow in its development, his lackey was called Basin. Thanks to the hopes which his master entertained of some day entering into orders, he was always clothed in black, as became the servant of a churchman. He was a Berrichon of from thirty-five to forty years of age, mild, peaceable, sleek, employing the leisure his master left him in the perusal of pious works, providing for the two, to be sure, a frugal but excellent dinner. In addition, he was dumb, blind, and deaf, and of unimpeachable fidelity.

And now that we are acquainted, superficially at least, with the masters and the valets, let us pass on to the dwellings occupied by each of them.

Athos dwelt in the Rue Férou, within two steps of the

Luxembourg; his apartments consisted of two small chambers, very nicely fitted up, in a furnished house, the hostess of which, still young, and still really handsome, cast tender glances at him to no purpose. Some fragments of great splendor in the past appeared here and there upon the walls of this modest lodging; a sword, for example, richly damascened, which belonged by its make to the times of Francis I., the hilt of which alone, incrusted with precious stones, might be worth two hundred pistoles, and which, nevertheless, in his moments of greatest distress, Athos had never pledged nor offered for sale. This sword had long been an object of ambition to Porthos. Porthos would have given ten years of his life to possess this sword.

One day, when he had an appointment with a duchess, he even endeavored to borrow it of Athos. Athos, without saying anything, emptied his pockets, got together all his jewels, purses, shoulder-knots, and gold chains, and offered them all to Porthos; but the sword, he said, was sealed to its place, and should never quit it, until its master should himself quit his lodgings. In addition to the sword there was a portrait representing a nobleman of the time of Henry III., dressed with the greatest elegance, and wearing the order of the Holy Ghost, and this portrait had with Athos a certain family likeness, which indicated that this great noble, a knight of the king's orders, was his ancestor.

Besides these things a casket of magnificent goldsmith's work, having the same arms as the sword and the portrait, formed a centre ornament to the mantel-piece, which assorted badly with the rest of the garnishings. Athos always carried the key of this coffer about him, but he one day opened it before Porthos, and Porthos was convinced that this coffer contained nothing but letters and papers — love letters and family papers, no doubt.

Porthos lived in apartments, large in size, and of a very sumptuous appearance, in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier. Every time he passed with a friend before his windows, at one of which Mousqueton was sure to be standing in full livery, Porthos raised his head and his hand, and said, "*That is my abode!*" But he was never to be found at home, he never invited anybody to go up with him, and no one could form an idea of what this sumptuous semblance contained in the shape of real riches.

As for Aramis, he dwelt in a little lodging composed of a boudoir, an eating-room, and a bedroom, which room, situated,

MOUSQUETON MADE A VERY GOOD FIGURE WHEN ATTENDING ON HIS MASTER.—p. 71.

as the others were, on the ground floor, looked out upon a little, fresh, green garden, shady and impenetrable to the eyes of his neighbors.

With regard to D'Artagnan, we know how he was lodged, and we have already made acquaintance with his lackey, Master Planchet.

D'Artagnan, who was by nature very inquisitive, as people generally are who possess the genius of intrigue, did all he could to make out who Athos, Porthos, and Aramis really were; for under these *noms de guerre* each of these young men concealed his family name. Athos in particular, who a league away looked like a noble. He addressed himself therefore to Porthos, to gain information respecting Athos and Aramis; and to Aramis, in order to learn something of Porthos.

Unfortunately Porthos knew nothing of the life of his silent companion but what was known to every one. It was said he had had great misfortunes in his love affairs, and that a terrible deception had forever poisoned the life of this gentleman. What could this deception be? Nobody knew anything about it.

As to Porthos, except his real name, which no one but M. de Tréville knew, as he likewise knew those of his two comrades, his life was very easily fathomed. Vain and indiscreet, you could see through him like glass. The only thing which could have misled the investigator would have been for him to believe all the good he said of himself.

With respect to Aramis, though he had the air of having nothing secret about him, he was a young fellow made up of mysteries, making curt replies to questions put to him about others, and eluding those which concerned himself. One day, D'Artagnan, having for a long time asked him about Porthos, and having learned from him the report which prevailed concerning the intrigue of the musketeer with a princess, wished to gain a little insight into the amorous adventures of his interlocutor.

"And you, my dear companion," said he, "you who speak of the baronesses, countesses, and princesses of others?"

"Egad! I spoke because Porthos talks of them himself, because he cried out all these fine things before me. But, be assured, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan, that if I had obtained them from any other source, or if they had been confided to me, there would have been no confessor more discreet than I."

"Oh! I don't doubt that," replied D'Artagnan; "but it

seems to me that you are tolerably familiar with coats of arms, a certain embroidered handkerchief, for instance, to which I owe the honor of your acquaintance?"

This time Aramis did not get angry, but assumed the most modest air, and replied in a friendly tone:

"My dear friend, do not forget that I wish to belong to the church, and that I avoid all mundane opportunities. The handkerchief you saw had not been given to me, but it had been forgotten, and left at my house by one of my friends. I was obliged to pick it up, in order not to compromise both him and the lady he loves. As for myself, I neither have nor do I desire to have a mistress, following, in that respect, the very judicious example of Athos, who has none, any more than I have."

"But, what the devil! you are not an abbé, you are a musketeer!"

"A musketeer for a time, my friend, as the cardinal says, a musketeer against my will, but a churchman at heart, believe me. Athos and Porthos dragged me into this to give me occupation. I had, at the moment of being ordained, a little difficulty with — but that would hardly interest you, and I am taking up your valuable time."

"Oh! not at all; it interests me very much," cried D'Artagnan, "and at this moment I have absolutely nothing to do."

"Yes, but I have my breviary to say," answered Aramis; "then some verses to compose, which Madame d'Aiguillon begged of me. Then I must go to Rue St. Honoré, in order to purchase some rouge for Madame de Chevreuse; so you see, my dear friend, that if you are not in a hurry, I am."

And Aramis held out his hand in a cordial manner to his young companion, and took leave of him.

Notwithstanding all the pains he took, D'Artagnan was unable to learn any more concerning his three new friends. He, therefore, made up his mind to believe in the present all that was said of their past, hoping for more certain and extended revelations in the future. In the meanwhile, he looked upon Athos as an Achilles, Porthos as an Ajax, and Aramis as a Joseph.

Moreover, the life of the four young men was joyous enough. Athos played, and always with bad luck. Nevertheless, he never borrowed a sou of his companions, although his purse was ever at their service; and when he had played upon credit, he always awakened his creditor by six o'clock the next morning, to pay the debt of the preceding evening.

Porthos had spells of gambling; on those days if he won he was insolent and ostentatious; if he lost, he disappeared completely for several days, after which he reappeared with a pale face and long countenance, but with money in his purse.

Aramis never played. He was the worst musketeer and the most unconvivial companion imaginable. He had always something or other to do. Sometimes, in the midst of dinner, when every one, under the attraction of wine and in the warmth of conversation, believed they had two or three hours longer to enjoy themselves at table, Aramis looked at his watch, arose with a bland smile, and took leave of the company, to go, as he said, to consult a casuist, with whom he had an appointment. At other times he would return home to write a treatise, and requested his friends not to disturb him.

At this Athos would smile, with his charming, melancholy smile, so becoming to his noble countenance, and Porthos would drink, swearing that Aramis would never be anything but a village curate.

Planchet, D'Artagnan's valet, supported his good fortune nobly; he received thirty sous per day, and during one whole month he returned home gay as a lark, and affable towards his master. When the wind of adversity began to blow upon the household of Rue des Fossoyeurs, that is to say, when the forty pistoles of King Louis XIII. were consumed, or nearly so, he began a series of complaints which Athos thought nauseous, Porthos unseemly, and Aramis ridiculous. Athos advised D'Artagnan to dismiss the fellow, Porthos was of the opinion that he should give him a good thrashing first, and Aramis contended that a master should never hear anything but the compliments paid him.

"This is all very easy for you to say," replied D'Artagnan; "for you Athos, who live like a dumb man with Grimaud, forbidding him to speak, and consequently never exchanging angry words with him; for you, Porthos, who keep up such magnificent style, and are a god for your valet Mousqueton; and for you, Aramis, who, always abstracted by your theological studies, inspire your servant Bazin, a mild, religious man, with a profound respect; but for me, who am without standing and without resources, — for me, who am neither a musketeer, nor even a guard, what am I to do to inspire either affection, terror, or respect in Planchet?"

"The thing is serious," answered the three friends; "it is a family affair; valets are like wives; they must be placed at

once upon the footing in which you wish them to remain. Reflect upon it."

D'Artagnan did reflect, and resolved to thrash Planchet provisionally, which was executed with the conscientiousness that D'Artagnan put in everything; then, after having well beaten him, he forbade him to leave his service without his permission. "For," added he, "the future cannot fail to mend; I inevitably look for better times. Your fortune is therefore made if you remain with me, and I am too good a master to allow you to miss such a chance by granting you the dismissal you require."

This manner of acting created much respect for D'Artagnan's policy among the musketeers. Planchet was equally seized with admiration, and said no more about going away.

The life of the four young men had become common to each and all. D'Artagnan, who had no settled habits of his own, since he had just dropped from his province into the midst of a world quite new to him, assumed immediately the habits of his friends.

They rose about eight o'clock in the winter, about six in summer, and went to get the countersign and see how things were at M. de Tréville's. D'Artagnan, although he was not a musketeer, performed the duty of one with touching punctuality: he was always mounting guard, because he always kept that one of his friends company who mounted his. He was well known at the hôtel of the musketeers, where every one considered him a good comrade; M. de Tréville, who had appreciated his worth at the first glance, and who bore him a real affection, never ceased recommending him to the king.

On their side, the three musketeers were much attached to their young comrade. The friendship which united these four men, and the need they felt for meeting three or four times a day, whether for duels, business, or pleasure, caused them to be continually running after one another like shadows, and you constantly met the inseparables looking one for the other, from the Luxembourg to the Place Saint-Sulpice, or from the Rue du Vieux-Colombier to the Luxembourg.

In the meanwhile the promises of M. de Tréville were accomplishing. One fine morning the king commanded the Chevalier des Essarts to admit D'Artagnan as a cadet in his company of guards. D'Artagnan, with a sigh, donned this uniform, which he would have exchanged for that of a musketeer at the price of ten years of his existence. But M. de Tréville promised this favor after a novitiate of two years, a novitiate

which might, besides, be abridged if an opportunity should present itself for D'Artagnan to render the king any signal service, or to distinguish himself by some brilliant action. Upon this promise D'Artagnan withdrew, and the next day began service.

Then it became the turn of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis to mount guard with D'Artagnan, when he was on duty. By admitting D'Artagnan, the company of the Chevalier des Essarts thus received four men instead of one.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COURT INTRIGUE.

MEANWHILE, the forty pistoles of King Louis XIII., like all other things in this world, after having had a beginning, had had an end, and after this end our four companions began to be somewhat embarrassed. At first Athos supported the association for a time with his own means. Porthos succeeded him, and thanks to one of those disappearances to which people were accustomed, he was able to provide for the wants of all for a fortnight more; at last it became Aramis's turn, who performed it with a good grace, and who succeeded in procuring a few pistoles, as he said, by selling his theological books.

Then they, as usual, had recourse to M. de Tréville, who made some advances on their pay; but these advances could not go far with three musketeers who were already much in arrears, and a guardsman who as yet had no pay at all.

At length, when they found they were likely to be quite in want, they got together, by a final effort, eight or ten pistoles, with which Porthos went to the gaming-table. Unfortunately luck ran against him; he lost all, together with twenty-five pistoles for which he pledged his word.

Then the embarrassment became distress; the hungry friends, followed by their lackeys, were seen haunting the quays and guard-rooms, picking up among their friends abroad all the dinners they could meet with; for, according to the advice of Aramis, it was prudent to sow repasts right and left in prosperity in order to reap a few in time of need.

Athos was invited four times, and each time took his friends and their lackeys with him; Porthos had six chances, and made his friends enjoy them also; Aramis had eight. He was a man, as must have been already perceived, who made little noise, and did a great deal.

As to D'Artagnan, who as yet knew nobody in the capital, he only found one breakfast of chocolate at the house of a priest, his fellow-countryman, and one dinner with a cornet of the guards. He took his army to the priest's, where they devoured as much provision as would have lasted him for two months, and to the cornet's, who had a great spread; but, as Planchet said, "People eat but one meal at a time, even though they eat a good deal."

D'Artagnan thus found himself rather humiliated in having had but one meal and a half to offer his companions, for the breakfast at the priest's could only be counted as half a repast, in return for the feasts which Athos, Porthos, and Aramis had procured for him. He fancied himself a burden to the society, forgetting in his perfectly youthful good faith that he had fed this society for a month, and he set his preoccupied mind actively to work. He reflected that this coalition of four young, brave, enterprising, and active men ought to have some other object than swaggering walks, fencing lessons, and practical jokes, more or less witty.

In fact, four men, such as they were, four men devoted to one another, from their purses to their lives, four men always supporting one another, never yielding, executing singly or together the resolutions formed in common; four arms threatening the four points of the compass, or turning towards a single point, must inevitably, either subterraneously or in open day, by mining or in the trench, by cunning or by force, open for themselves a way towards the object they wished to attain, however well it might be defended, or however distant it might seem. The only thing that astonished D'Artagnan was, that his friends had never yet thought of this.

He was thinking of it seriously, and was racking his brain to find a direction for this single force increased fourfold, with which, as with Archimedes' lever, he had no doubt that they should succeed in moving the world, when some one tapped gently at his door. D'Artagnan awakened Planchet and ordered him to go and see who was there.

From this phrase — "D'Artagnan awakened Planchet" — the reader must not suppose that it was night, or that the day had not yet come. No, it had just struck four. Planchet, two hours before, had asked his master for some dinner, and had been answered with the proverb, "He who sleeps, dines." And Planchet dined by sleeping.

A man was introduced, of rather simple mien, who had the appearance of a tradesman.

Planchet, by way of dessert, would have liked to hear the conversation, but the bourgeois declared to D'Artagnan that what he had to say, being important and confidential, he desired to be left alone with him.

D'Artagnan dismissed Planchet, and requested his visitor to be seated.

There was a moment of silence, during which the two men looked at each other, as if to make a preliminary acquaintance, after which D'Artagnan bowed as a sign that he was listening.

"I have heard M. d'Artagnan spoken of as a very brave young man," said the bourgeois, "and this reputation, which he justly enjoys, has determined me to confide a secret to him."

"Speak, sir, speak," said D'Artagnan, who instinctively scented something advantageous.

The bourgeois made a fresh pause and continued:

"I have a wife who is seamstress to the queen, sir, and who is not deficient in either good conduct or beauty. I was induced to marry her about three years ago, although she had but very little dowry, because M. de La Porte, the queen's cloak-bearer, is her godfather, and befriends her—"

"Well, sir?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Well!" resumed the bourgeois, "well! sir, my wife was carried off yesterday morning, as she was coming out of her workroom."

"And by whom was your wife carried off?"

"I know nothing certain about the matter, sir, but I suspect some one."

"And who is the person you suspect?"

"A man who has been pursuing her for a long time."

"The devil!"

"But allow me to tell you, sir," continued the citizen, "that I am convinced that there is in all this less love than politics."

"Less love than politics," replied D'Artagnan, with a very meditative air; "and what do you suspect?"

"I do not know whether I ought to tell you what I suspect—"

"Sir, I beg you to observe that I ask you absolutely nothing. It is you who have come to me. It is you who have told me that you had a secret to confide to me. Act then as you think proper; there is still time to retreat."

"No, sir, no; you appear to be an honest young man, and I will place confidence in you. I believe, then, that it is not on account of any intrigues of her own that my wife has been carried off, but that it has been done on account of the amours of a much greater lady than she is."

"Ah! ah! can it be on account of the amours of Madame de Bois-Tracy?" said D'Artagnan, wishing to have the air, in the eyes of his bourgeois, of being up in court affairs.

"Higher, sir, higher."

"Of Madame d'Aiguillon?"

"Higher still."

"Of Madame de Chevreuse?"

"Higher; much higher!"

"Of the —?" D'Artagnan stopped.

"Yes, sir," replied the terrified bourgeois, in a tone so low that he was scarcely audible.

"And with whom?"

"With whom can it be, if not with the Duke of ——?"

"The Duke of ——!"

"Yes, sir," replied the bourgeois, giving a still lower intonation to his voice.

"But how do you know all this?"

"How do I know it?"

"Yes, how do you know it? No half-confidence, or—you understand!"

"I know it from my wife, sir,—from my wife herself."

"And she knows it—she herself—from whom?"

"From M. de La Porte. Did I not tell you that she was the goddaughter of M. de La Porte, the queen's confidential agent? Well, M. de La Porte placed her near her Majesty, in order that our poor queen might at least have some one in whom she could place confidence, abandoned as she is by the king, watched as she is by the cardinal, betrayed as she is by everybody."

"Ah! ah! It begins to grow clear," said D'Artagnan.

"Now my wife came home four days ago, sir; one of her conditions was that she should come and see me twice a week; for, as I had the honor to tell you, my wife loves me dearly; my wife, then, came and confided to me that the queen, at this very moment, entertained great fears."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. The cardinal, as it appears, pursues her and persecutes her more than ever. He cannot pardon her the story of the saraband. You know the story of the saraband?"

"Zounds! know it!" replied D'Artagnan, who knew nothing about it, but who wished to appear to know everything that was going on.

"So that it is now no longer hatred, but vengeance."

"Indeed!"

"And the queen believes —"

"Well, what does the queen believe?"

"She believes that some one has written to the Duke of Buckingham in her name."

"In the queen's name?"

"Yes, to make him come to Paris; and when once in Paris, to draw him into some snare."

"The devil! But your wife, sir, what has she to do with all this?"

"Her devotion to the queen is known, and they wish either to remove her from her mistress, or to intimidate her, in order to obtain her Majesty's secrets, or to seduce her and make use of her as a spy."

"That is all very probable," said D'Artagnan; "but the man who has carried her off — do you know him?"

"I have told you that I believe I know him."

"His name?"

"I do not know that; what I do know is that he is a creature of the cardinal's, his ready tool."

"But you have seen him?"

"Yes, my wife pointed him out to me one day."

"Has he anything remarkable about him, by which he may be recognized?"

"Oh! certainly; he is a noble of lofty carriage, black hair, swarthy complexion, piercing eye, white teeth, and a scar on his temple."

"A scar on his temple," cried D'Artagnan; "and also white teeth, a piercing eye, dark complexion, black hair, and haughty carriage; why, that's my man of Meung."

"He is your man, do you say?"

"Yes, yes; but that has nothing to do with it. No, I am mistaken; it simplifies the matter greatly, on the contrary; if your man is mine, with one blow I shall obtain two revenges, that's all; but where is this man to be met with?"

"I cannot inform you."

"Have you no information respecting his dwelling?"

"None; one day, as I was conveying my wife back to the Louvre, he was coming out as she was going in, and she showed him to me."

"The devil! the devil!" murmured D'Artagnan; "all this is vague enough; from whom did you learn the abduction of your wife?"

"From M. de La Porte."

"Did he give you any of the particulars?"

"He knew none himself."

"And you have learned none from any other quarter?"

"Yes, I have received—"

"What?"

"I fear I am committing a great imprudence."

"You still keep harping upon that; but I beg leave to observe to you that this time it is too late to retreat."

"I do not retreat, s'death!" cried the bourgeois, swearing to keep his courage up. "Besides, by the word of Bonacieux—"

"Your name is Bonacieux?" interrupted D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that is my name."

"You said, then, by the word of Bonacieux! Pardon me for interrupting you, but it appears to me that that name is familiar to me."

"Very possibly, sir. I am your landlord."

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan, half rising and bowing; "you are my landlord?"

"Yes, sir, yes. And as it is three months since you came, and, engaged as you must be in your important occupations, you have forgotten to pay me my rent; as, I say, I have not tormented you a single instant, I thought you would appreciate my delicacy."

"How can it be otherwise, my dear Bonacieux?" replied D'Artagnan; "believe me, I am wholly grateful for such conduct, and if, as I have told you, I can be of any service to you—"

"I believe you, sir, I believe you; and as I was about to say, by the word of Bonacieux I have confidence in you."

"Finish, then, that which you were about to say."

The bourgeois took a paper from his pocket, and presented it to D'Artagnan.

"A letter?" said the young man.

"Which I received this morning."

D'Artagnan opened it, and, as the daylight was fading, he drew near to the window to read it. The bourgeois followed him.

"'Do not seek for your wife,'" read D'Artagnan; "'she will be restored to you when she is no longer needed. If you make a single step to find her, you are lost.' That's pretty positive," continued D'Artagnan; "but, after all, it is only a threat."

"Yes; but that threat terrifies me. I am not a swordsman at all, sir; and I am afraid of the Bastille."

"Hum!" said D'Artagnan. "I have no greater regard for the Bastille than you. If it were nothing but a sword-thrust—"

"I have counted upon you on this occasion, sir."

"You have?"

"Seeing you constantly surrounded by musketeers of a very proud appearance, and knowing that these musketeers belonged to M. de Tréville, and were consequently enemies of the cardinal, I thought that you and your friends, while rendering justice to our poor queen, would not be displeased at having an opportunity of doing his Eminence an ill-turn."

"Without doubt."

"And then I thought that owing me three months' rent, which I have said nothing about—"

"Yes, yes; you have already given me that reason, and I find it excellent."

"And, besides, considering that as long as you do me the honor to remain in my house, I shall never speak to you about your future rent—"

"Very good!"

"And, adding to this, if necessary, that I mean to offer you fifty pistoles, if, against all probability, you should be short at the present moment."

"Admirable! but you are rich, then, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux?"

"I am comfortably off, sir, that's all; I have scraped together something like an income of two or three thousand crowns in the haberdashery business, and especially by investing some capital in the last voyage of the celebrated navigator, Jean Mocquet; so that you understand, sir. But—" cried the bourgeois.

"What?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Whom do I see yonder?"

"Where?"

"In the street, in front of your window, on the sill of that door: a man wrapped in a cloak."

"It is he!" cried D'Artagnan and the bourgeois, each at the same time having recognized his man.

"Ah! this time," cried D'Artagnan, leaping towards his sword, "this time he shall not escape me!"

Drawing his sword from the sheath, he rushed out of the apartment.

On the staircase he met Athos and Porthos, who were coming to see him. They separated, and D'Artagnan rushed between them like an arrow.

"Where the devil are you going?" cried the two musketeers in a breath.

"The man of Meung!" replied D'Artagnan, and disappeared.

D'Artagnan had more than once related to his friends his adventure with the unknown, as well as the apparition of the beautiful foreigner, to whom this man had confided some important letter.

The opinion of Athos was that D'Artagnan had lost his letter in the affray. A gentleman, in his opinion (and, according to D'Artagnan's portrait of him, the unknown must be a gentleman), a gentleman would be incapable of the baseness of stealing a letter.

Porthos had seen nothing in all this but a tryst, given by a lady to a cavalier, or by a cavalier to a lady, which had been disturbed by the presence of D'Artagnan and his yellow horse.

Aramis said that as these sorts of affairs were mysterious, it was better not to attempt to unravel them.

They understood then, from the few words which escaped from D'Artagnan, what affair was in hand, and as they thought that after having overtaken his man or lost sight of him, D'Artagnan would return to his rooms again, they kept on their way.

When they entered D'Artagnan's chamber, it was empty; the landlord, dreading the consequences of the meeting which was, doubtless, about to take place between the young man and the unknown, had, consistently with the character he had given himself, judged it most prudent to decamp.

CHAPTER IX.

D'ARTAGNAN'S CHARACTER UNFOLDS.

As Athos and Porthos had foreseen, at the expiration of half an hour D'Artagnan returned. He had this time again missed his man, who had disappeared as if by enchantment. D'Artagnan had run, sword in hand, through all the neighboring streets, but had found nobody resembling him whom he was looking for; then at last he came back to the point where he should perhaps have started, which was to knock at the door against which the unknown was leaning; but he had knocked uselessly ten or twelve times running, for no one answered, and some of the neighbors, who had put their noses out of their windows, or were brought to their doors by the noise, had assured him that the house, all the openings of which were in fact tightly closed, had been for six months completely uninhabited.

While D'Artagnan was running through the streets and knocking at doors, Aramis had joined his companions, so that on returning home D'Artagnan found the reunion complete.

"Well!" cried the three musketeers all together, on seeing D'Artagnan enter with his brow covered with perspiration and his face clouded with anger.

"Well!" cried he, throwing his sword upon the bed; "this man must be the devil in person — he has disappeared like a phantom, like a shade, like a spectre."

"Do you believe in apparitions?" asked Athos of Porthos.

"I never believe in anything I have not seen, and as I never have seen an apparition, I don't believe in them."

"The Bible," said Aramis, "makes our belief in them a law; the shade of Samuel appeared to Saul, and it is an article of faith that I should be very sorry to see any doubt thrown upon, Porthos."

"At all events, man or devil, body or shadow, illusion or reality, this man is born for my damnation, for his flight has caused us to miss a glorious affair, gentlemen, an affair by which there were a hundred pistoles, and perhaps more, to be gained."

"How is that?" cried Porthos and Aramis in a breath.

As to Athos, faithful to his system of silence, he satisfied himself with interrogating D'Artagnan by a look.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, to his domestic, who just then insinuated his head through the half-open door in order to catch some fragments of the conversation, "go down to my landlord, M. Bonacieux, and tell him to send me half a dozen bottles of Beaugency wine; I prefer that."

"Ah! ah! what, you have full credit with your landlord, then?" asked Porthos.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "from this very day; and mind! if his wine is bad, we will send to him for better."

"We must use and not abuse," said Aramis sententiously.

"I always said that D'Artagnan had the longest head of the four," said Athos, who, after having uttered this opinion, to which D'Artagnan replied with a bow, immediately resumed his habitual silence.

"But come, tell us what is this about?" asked Porthos.

"Yes," said Aramis, "confide it to us, my dear friend, unless the honor of some lady be concerned in this confidence; in that case you would do better to keep it to yourself."

"Be calm," replied D'Artagnan; "the honor of no one shall have to complain of what I have to tell you."

He then told his friends, word for word, all that had passed between him and his landlord, and how the man who had carried off the wife of his worthy landlord was the same with whom he had had a difference at the hostelry of the Jolly Miller.

"Your affair is not a bad one," said Athos, after having tasted the wine like a connoisseur, and indicated by a nod of his head that he thought it good, "and fifty or sixty pistoles may be got out of this good man. Now, the only thing left is to ascertain whether these fifty or sixty pistoles are worth the risk of four heads."

"But please to observe," cried D'Artagnan, "that there is a woman in the affair, a woman carried off, a woman who is doubtless threatened, tortured perhaps, and all because she is faithful to her mistress."

"Beware, D'Artagnan, beware," said Aramis; "you grow a little too warm, in my opinion, about the fate of Madame Bonacieux. Woman was created for our destruction, and from her came all our miseries."

At this saying of Aramis the brow of Athos became clouded, and he bit his lips.

"It is not Madame Bonacieux about whom I am anxious," cried D'Artagnan, "but the queen, whom the king abandons, whom the cardinal persecutes, and who sees the heads of all her friends fall one after the other."

"Why does she love what we hate most in the world, the Spaniards and the English?"

"Spain is her country," replied D'Artagnan; "and it is very natural that she should love the Spanish, who are children of the same soil as herself. As to the second reproach, I have heard it said that she does not love the English, but an Englishman."

"Well, by my faith!" said Athos, "we must confess that this Englishman was worthy of being loved. I never saw a man with a nobler air than his."

"Without taking into consideration that he dresses as nobody else can," said Porthos. "I was at the Louvre the day he scattered his pearls; and, zounds! I picked up two that I sold for ten pistoles each. Do you know him, Aramis?"

"As well as you do, gentlemen; for I was among those who seized him in the garden at Amiens, into which M. Putange, the queen's equerry, introduced me. I was at the seminary at the time, and the adventure appeared to me to be cruel for the king."

"Which would not prevent me," said D'Artagnan, "if I knew where the Duke of Buckingham was, to take him by the hand and lead him to the queen, were it only to make the cardinal angry; for our real, our only, our eternal enemy, gentlemen, is the cardinal, and if we could find means to play him a cruel trick, I confess that I would voluntarily risk my head in doing it."

"And did the mercer," rejoined Athos, "tell you, D'Artagnan, that the queen thought that Buckingham had been brought over by a forged letter?"

"She is afraid so."

"Wait a minute, then," said Aramis.

"What for?" demanded Porthos.

"Go on. I am trying to recall some circumstances."

"And now I am convinced," said D'Artagnan, "that this abduction of the queen's seamstress is connected with the events of which we are speaking; and perhaps with the presence of the Duke of Buckingham at Paris."

"The Gascon is full of ideas," said Porthos, with admiration.

"I like to hear him talk," said Athos; "his dialect amuses me."

"Gentlemen," cried Aramis, "listen to this."

"Listen to Aramis," said his three friends.

"Yesterday I was at the house of a learned doctor of theology whom I sometimes consult about my studies."

Athos smiled.

"He resides in a quiet quarter," continued Aramis; "his tastes and his profession require it. Now, at the moment that I left his house —"

Here Aramis stopped.

"Well," cried his auditors; "at the moment you left his house?"

Aramis appeared to make a strong inward effort, like a man who, in the midst of telling a lie, finds himself stopped by some unforeseen obstacle; but the eyes of his three companions were fixed upon him, their ears were wide open, and there was no means of retreat.

"This doctor has a niece," continued Aramis.

"A niece! has he?" interrupted Porthos.

"A very respectable lady," said Aramis.

The three friends began to laugh.

"Ah! if you laugh, or doubt what I say," replied Aramis, "you shall know nothing."

"We are as stanch believers as Mahometans, and as mute as catafalques," said Athos.

"I will go on, then," resumed Aramis. "This niece comes sometimes to see her uncle; and, by chance, was there yesterday at the same time that I was, and I could do no less than offer to conduct her to her carriage."

"Oh! oh! Then this niece of the doctor's keeps a carriage, does she?" interrupted Porthos, one of whose faults was a great looseness of speech; "a very nice acquaintance, my friend!"

"Porthos," replied Aramis, "I have already had occasion to observe to you, more than once, that you are very indiscreet; and that this injures you with women."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," cried D'Artagnan, who began to get a glimpse of the result of the adventure, "the thing is serious; endeavor, then, not to joke, if possible. Go on, Aramis, go on."

"All at once, a tall, dark man, with the manner of a gentleman — come! the same style as yours, D'Artagnan."

"The same, perhaps," said he.

"Possibly," continued Aramis — "came towards me accompanied by five or six men, who followed at about ten paces behind him; and, in the politest tone, 'Duke,' said he to me, 'and you, madame,' continued he, addressing the lady, who had hold of my arm —"

"The doctor's niece?"

"Hold your tongue, Porthos," said Athos; "you are insupportable."

"'Be so kind as to get into this carriage; and that without offering the slightest resistance, or making the least noise.'"

"He took you for Buckingham!" cried D'Artagnan.

"I believe so," replied Aramis.

"But the lady?" asked Porthos.

"He took her for the queen!" said D'Artagnan.

"Just so," replied Aramis.

"The Gascon is the devil!" cried Athos; "nothing escapes him."

"The fact is," said Porthos, "Aramis is of the same height and something of the form of the handsome duke; but it nevertheless appears to me that the uniform of a musketeer —"

"I wore a very large cloak," said Aramis.

"In the month of July; the devil!" said Porthos. "Is the doctor afraid you should be recognized?"

"I can understand that the spy may have been deceived by your figure; but your face —"

"I had a very large hat on," said Aramis.

"Oh! good lord!" cried Porthos, "how many precautions in order to study theology!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "do not let us lose our time in jesting; let us separate, and let us seek the mercer's wife; that is the key of the intrigue."

"A woman of such inferior condition! do you believe it, D'Artagnan?" said Porthos, protruding his lip contemptuously.

"She is goddaughter to La Porte, the confidential valet of the queen. Have I not told you so, gentlemen? Besides, it has perhaps been a scheme of her Majesty's to have sought, on this occasion, for such lowly support. High heads can be seen from a distance; and the cardinal is far-sighted."

"Well," said Porthos, "in the first place make a bargain with the mercer; and a good bargain, too."

"That's useless," said D'Artagnan; "for I believe if he does not pay us, we shall be well enough paid by another party."

At this moment a sudden noise of footsteps was heard upon the stairs, the door was thrown violently open, and the unfortunate mercer rushed into the chamber in which the council was being held.

"Save me! gentlemen! save me!" cried he. "There are four men come to arrest me; save me! for the love of heaven, save me!"

Porthos and Aramis arose.

"One moment," cried D'Artagnan, making them a sign to replace their half-drawn swords; "one moment; on this occasion we don't need courage; we need prudence."

"And yet," cried Porthos, "we will not leave —"

"You will let D'Artagnan act as he thinks proper," said Athos; "he has, I repeat, the longest head of us all, and for my part I declare I obey him. Do as you think best, D'Artagnan."

At this moment the four guards appeared at the door of the ante-chamber, but seeing four musketeers standing with swords at their sides, they hesitated to advance farther.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in; you are here in my apartment, and we are all faithful servants of the king and the cardinal."

"Then, gentlemen, you will not oppose our executing the orders we have received?" asked the one who appeared to be the leader of the party.

"On the contrary, gentlemen, we would assist you if it were necessary."

"What is he saying?" grumbled Porthos.

"That you are a simpleton," said Athos; "hold your tongue."

"But you promised me," said the poor mercer, in a very low voice.

"We can save you only by being free ourselves," replied D'Artagnan, in a low and hurried tone, "and if we appear inclined to defend you, they will arrest us with you."

"It seems to me, nevertheless —"

"Come in, gentlemen! come in!" called out D'Artagnan; "I have no motive for defending the gentleman. I saw him to-day for the first time, and he can tell you on what occasion; he came to demand the rent of my lodging. Is not that true, M. Bonacieux? Answer."

"That's the very truth," cried the mercer, "but the gentleman does not tell you —"

"Silence with respect to me! silence with respect to my friends! silence about the queen, above all, or you will ruin everybody without saving yourself. Now, gentlemen, come, take away this man!"

And D'Artagnan pushed the half-stupefied mercer among the guards, saying to him:

"You are a shabby old fellow, my dear! — you come to demand money of me! of a musketeer! — to prison with him; gentlemen, once more, take him to prison, and keep him under key as long as possible — that will give me time to pay him."

The officers were full of thanks, and took away their prey.

At the moment they were going down, D'Artagnan laid his hand on their leader's shoulder.

"Shall I not have the pleasure of drinking your health, and you mine?" said D'Artagnan, filling two glasses with the Beaugency wine which he had obtained through the liberality of M. Bonacieux.

"That will do me great honor," said the chief of the officers, "and I accept with gratitude."

"Then to yours, sir, — what is your name?"

"Boisrenard."

"Monsieur Boisrenard!"

"To yours, my good sir, — in your turn, what is your name, if you please?"

"D'Artagnan."

"To yours, Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"And above all others," cried D'Artagnan, as if carried away by his enthusiasm, "to that of the king and the cardinal."

The chief of the officers would perhaps have doubted the sincerity of D'Artagnan if the wine had been bad; but the wine was good, and he was convinced.

"Why, what devilish villainy have you done there," said Porthos, when the head policeman had rejoined his companions and the four friends were left alone. "Shame! shame! for four musketeers to allow an unfortunate devil who cried out for help to be arrested in their midst. And a gentleman to hob-nob with a bailiff!"

"Porthos," said Aramis, "Athos has already told you you are a simpleton, and I am quite of his opinion. D'Artagnan, you are a great man, and when you occupy M. de Tréville's place, I will come and ask your influence to secure me an abbey."

"Well! I am quite lost!" said Porthos; "do you approve of what D'Artagnan has just done?"

"Zounds! indeed I do!" said Athos, "I not only approve of what he has done, but I congratulate him upon it."

"And now, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, without stopping to explain his conduct to Porthos, "all for one, one for all, that is our motto, is it not?"

"And yet —" said Porthos.

"Hold out your hand and swear!" cried Athos and Aramis at the same time.

Overcome by example, grumbling to himself, Porthos stretched out his hand, and the four friends repeated with one voice the formula dictated by D'Artagnan.

"All for one, one for all."

"That's well! Now let every one retire to his own house," said D'Artagnan, as if he had done nothing but command all his life; "and attention! for from this moment we are at war with the cardinal."

CHAPTER X.

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MOUSE-TRAP.

THE invention of the mouse-trap does not date from our day; as soon as society, in developing, had invented any kind of police, that police, in its turn, invented mouse-traps.

As perhaps our readers are not familiar with the slang of the Rue de Jérusalem, and as, in all the fifteen years we have been writing, we now, for the first time, apply this word to the thing, let us explain to them what a mouse-trap is.

When in a house, of whatever kind it may be, an individual suspected of any crime is arrested, the arrest is kept secret; four or five men are placed in ambuscade in the first apartment, the door is opened to all who knock, it is closed after them, and they are arrested; so that at the end of two or three days they have in their power almost all the frequenters of the establishment. And this is a mouse-trap.

The apartment of Master Bonacieux, then, became a mouse-trap, and whoever appeared there was taken and examined by the cardinal's people. It goes without saying that as a private passage led to the first floor, on which D'Artagnan lodged, those who called to see him were exempt from all search.

Besides, nobody came there but the three musketeers; they had all been engaged in earnest search and inquiries, but had discovered nothing. Athos had even gone so far as to question M. de Tréville, a thing which, considering the habitual reticence of the worthy musketeer, had very much astonished his captain. But M. de Tréville knew nothing, except that the last time he had seen the cardinal, the king, and the queen, the cardinal looked very thoughtful, the king uneasy, and the redness of the queen's eyes denoted that she had been deprived of sleep, or had been weeping. But this last circumstance was not at all striking, as the queen, since her marriage, had slept badly and wept much.

M. de Tréville requested Athos, whatever might happen, to be observant of his duty to the king, but more particularly to the queen, begging him to convey the same request to his comrades.

As to D'Artagnan, he did not stir from his apartment. He had converted his chamber into an observatory. From his windows he saw all who came and were caught; then, having removed some of the tiles of his floor and dug into the planking, and nothing remaining but a simple ceiling between him and the room beneath, in which the examinations were made, he heard all that passed between the inquisitors and the accused.

The examinations, preceded by a minute search of the persons arrested, were almost all conceived in this manner:

"Has Madame Bonacieux given anything to you for her husband, or any other person?

"Has Monsieur Bonacieux given anything to you for his wife, or for any other person?

"Has either the one or the other confided anything to you by word of mouth?"

"If they were acquainted with anything, they would not

question people in this manner," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Now, what is it they want to know? Why, whether the Duke of Buckingham is in Paris, and whether he has not had, or is not to have, some interview with the queen."

D'Artagnan was satisfied with this idea, which, according to all he had heard, was not wanting in probability.

In the meanwhile the mouse-trap continued in operation, as likewise did D'Artagnan's vigilance.

On the evening of the day after the arrest of poor Bonacieux, as Athos had just left D'Artagnan to go to M. de Tréville's, as nine o'clock had just struck, and as Planchet, who had not yet made the bed, was beginning his task, a knocking was heard at the street-door; the door was instantly opened and shut: some one was caught in the mouse-trap.

D'Artagnan flew to his peek-hole, and laid himself down on the floor at full length to listen.

Cries were soon heard, and then moans, which some one was endeavoring to stifle. There were no questionings.

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan to himself; "it's a woman — they are searching her — she resists — they use force — the scoundrels!"

In spite of all his prudence, D'Artagnan had as much as he could do not to take part in the scene that was going on below.

"But I tell you that I am the mistress of the house, gentlemen! I tell you I am Madame Bonacieux! I tell you I belong to the queen!" cried the unfortunate woman.

"Madame Bonacieux!" murmured D'Artagnan; "can I have been so lucky as to have found what everybody is looking for?"

"You are the very one we were waiting for," replied the examiners.

The voice became more and more indistinct; a tumultuous movement shook the wainscoting. The victim was resisting as much as one woman can resist four men.

"Pardon, gentlemen, par—" murmured the voice, which could now be heard only in inarticulate sounds.

"They are gagging her, they are going to drag her away," cried D'Artagnan to himself, springing from the floor. "My sword! Good, it is by my side. Planchet!"

"Sir."

"Run and get Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. One of the three will certainly be at home, perhaps all three are. Tell them to arm, to come here, and be quick about it! Ah! I remember, Athos is at M. de Tréville's."

"But where are you going, sir, where are you going?"

"I am going down by the window, in order to be there the sooner," cried D'Artagnan. "Do you put back the tiles, sweep the floor, go out at the door, and run where I bid you."

"Oh! sir! sir! you will kill yourself," cried Planchet.

"Hold your tongue, you stupid fellow," said D'Artagnan, and laying hold of the window-ledge, he let himself fall from the first story, which luckily was not far, without even scratching himself.

He then went straight to the door and knocked, murmuring:

"I will go and be caught in the mouse-trap in my turn, but woe be to the cats that shall pounce upon such a mouse!"

The knocker had scarcely sounded under the hand of the young man than the tumult ceased, steps approached, the door was opened, and D'Artagnan, sword in hand, rushed into Master Bonacieux's apartment, the door of which, doubtless, moved by a spring, closed after him of itself.

Then those who were still living in Bonacieux's unfortunate house, together with the nearest neighbors, heard loud cries, stamping of feet, clashing of swords, and much breaking of furniture. Then, a moment after, those who, surprised by this tumult, had gone to their windows to learn the cause of it could see the door open, and four men, clothed in black, not come out of it, but fly, like so many frightened crows, leaving on the ground, and on the corners of the furniture, feathers from their wings; that is to say, portions of their clothes and fragments of their cloaks.

D'Artagnan was conqueror, without much trouble, it must be confessed, for only one of the bailiffs was armed, and he defended himself only for form's sake. It is true that the three others had endeavored to knock the young man down with chairs, stools, and crockery; but two or three scratches made by the Gascon's blade terrified them. Ten minutes had sufficed for their defeat, and D'Artagnan remained master of the field of battle.

The neighbors who had opened their windows, with the indifference peculiar to the inhabitants of Paris in those times of perpetual riots and disturbances, closed them again as soon as they saw the four men in black fly away; their instinct telling them that, for the moment, all was over.

Besides, it began to grow late, and in those days, as at the present, people went to bed early in the Luxembourg quarter.

On being left alone with Madame Bonacieux, D'Artagnan turned towards her; the poor woman had fallen back upon an

arm-chair in a half-fainting state. D'Artagnan examined her with a rapid glance.

She was a charming woman, of twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, dark hair, blue eyes, a slightly turned-up nose, admirable teeth, and a pink and opal complexion. There, however, the signs stopped which might have confounded her with a lady of rank. Her hands were white, but pudgy; her feet did not bespeak the woman of quality. Fortunately, D'Artagnan had not yet reached the point of minding these details.

While D'Artagnan was examining Madame Bonacieux, and was, as we have said, close to her, he saw on the ground a fine cambric handkerchief which he naturally picked up, and on the corner of which he recognized the same cipher that he had seen on the handkerchief which had nearly caused him and Aramis to cut each other's throats.

From that time D'Artagnan had been cautious with respect to handkerchiefs having arms on them, and he therefore without a remark placed the one he had just picked up in Madame Bonacieux's pocket.

At that moment Madame Bonacieux recovered her senses. She opened her eyes, looked around her with terror, saw that the apartment was empty, and that she was alone with her liberator. She immediately held out her hands to him with a smile — Madame Bonacieux had the sweetest smile in the world!

"Ah! sir!" said she, "you have saved me: allow me to thank you."

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, "I have only done what every gentleman would have done in my place — you owe me, then, no thanks."

"Yes, I do, sir! yes, I do; and I hope to prove to you that you have not aided an ungrateful person. But what could these men, whom I at first took for robbers, want of me, and why is M. Bonacieux not here?"

"Madame, those men were much more dangerous than any robbers could have been, for they are the agents of the cardinal; and as to your husband, M. Bonacieux, he is not here, because he was yesterday evening taken away to the Bastille."

"My husband in the Bastille!" cried Madame Bonacieux. "Oh! my God! what can he have done? Poor, dear man! he is innocence itself!"

And something like a faint smile glided over the still terrified features of the young woman

"What has he done, madame?" said D'Artagnan. "I believe that his only crime is to have at the same time the good fortune and the misfortune to be your husband."

"But, sir, you know then —"

"I know that you have been carried off, madame."

"And by whom? Do you know? Oh! if you know, tell me!"

"By a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, with black hair, a swarthy complexion, and a scar on his left temple."

"That is he, that is he; but his name?"

"Ah! his name? I do not know that."

"And did my husband know I had been carried off?"

"He was informed of it by a letter written to him by the abductor himself."

"And does he suspect," said Madame Bonacieux, with some embarrassment, "the cause of this event?"

"He attributed it, I believe, to a political cause."

"I suspected so myself at first, and now I think entirely as he does. So dear M. Bonacieux has not, then, for an instant suspected me?"

"Far from it, madame; he was too proud of your prudence, and particularly of your love."

A second smile stole almost imperceptibly over the rosy lips of the pretty young woman.

"But," continued D'Artagnan, "how did you escape?"

"I took advantage of a moment when they left me alone; and as I had known since morning what to think of my abduction, with the help of my sheets I let myself down from the window; then, as I thought my husband would be at home, I hastened here."

"To place yourself under his protection?"

"Oh, no! poor, dear man! I knew very well that he was incapable of defending me; but, as he could be otherwise useful to us, I wished to inform him."

"Of what?"

"Oh! that is not my secret; I, therefore, cannot tell you."

"Besides," said D'Artagnan, "(pardon me, madame, if, guard as I am, I remind you of prudence) — besides, I believe we are not here in a very proper place for imparting confidences. The men I have put to flight will return reinforced; if they find us here, we are lost. I have sent, to be sure, for three of my friends, but who knows whether they are at home?"

"Yes! yes! you are right," cried the terrified Madame Bonacieux; "let us fly! let us escape."

At these words she passed her arm under that of D'Artagnan, and pulled him forward eagerly.

"But whither shall we fly? — where escape to?"

"Let us in the first place get away from this house — then clear of it we shall see."

And the young woman and the young man, without taking the trouble to shut the door after them, descended the Rue des Fossoyeurs rapidly, turned into the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince, and did not stop till they came to the Place-Saint-Sulpice.

"And now what are we to do, and where do you wish me to take you?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I am quite at a loss how to answer you, I confess," said Madame Bonacieux; "my intention was to inform M. de La Porte, by means of my husband, in order that M. de La Porte might tell us exactly what has taken place at the Louvre in the course of the last three days, and whether there were any danger in presenting myself there."

"But I," said D'Artagnan, "can go and inform M. de La Porte."

"No doubt you could; only there is one drawback in it, and this is that M. Bonacieux is known at the Louvre, and would be allowed to pass; whereas you are not known there, and the gate would be closed against you."

"Ah! bah!" said D'Artagnan; "there is no doubt you have at some wicket of the Louvre a porter who is devoted to you, and who, thanks to a password, would —"

Madame Bonacieux looked earnestly at the young man.

"And if I give you this password," said she, "would you forget it as soon as you had made use of it?"

"By my honor! by the faith of a gentleman!" said D'Artagnan, with an accent so truthful no one could mistake it.

"Then I believe you. You appear to be a brave young man; besides, your fortune, perhaps, will be the result of your devotion."

"I will do, without a promise, and conscientiously, all that I can do to serve the king and be agreeable to the queen: use me, then, as a friend."

"But I? — where shall I go in the meanwhile?"

"Do you know no one to whose house M. de La Porte can go to get you?"

"No, I will trust nobody."

"Stop," said D'Artagnan; "we are near Athos's door. Yes, here it is."

"Who is this Athos?"

"One of my friends."

"But if he should be at home, and see me?"

"He is not at home, and I will carry away the key, after having placed you in his apartment."

"But if he should return?"

"Oh! he won't return; and if he should, he will be told that I have brought a lady with me, and that lady is in his apartment."

"But that will compromise me sadly, you know."

"Of what consequence can it be to you?—nobody knows you; besides, we are in a situation in which we must not be too particular."

"Come, then, let us go to your friend's house; where does he live?"

"Rue Férou, two steps from here."

"Come, then."

And both resumed their way. As D'Artagnan had foreseen, Athos was not at home; he took the key, which was usually given him as one of the family, ascended the stairs, and introduced Madame Bonacieux into the little apartment of which we have already given a description.

"Make yourself at home," said he; "wait here, fasten the door inside, and open it to nobody unless you hear three taps like these;" and he tapped thrice, two taps close together and pretty hard, the other after an interval, lighter.

"That is all right," said Madame Bonacieux; "now it is my turn to give you my orders."

"I am all attention."

"Present yourself at the wicket of the Louvre, towards the Rue de l'Échelle, and ask for Germain."

"Well—and then?"

"He will ask you what you want, and you will answer by these two words—Tours and Brussels. He will immediately put himself under your orders."

"And what shall I order him to do?"

"To go and fetch M. de La Porte, the queen's valet."

"And when he shall have found him, and M. de La Porte has come?"

"You will send him to me."

"Very well; but where and how shall I see you again?"

"Do you, then, wish very much—to see me again."

"Certainly I do."

"Well, let that care be mine, and do not worry."

"I depend upon your word."

"Certainly."

"Very well! Count on me for bringing this about, and have no fear!"

"I may depend on your word?"

"You may!"

D'Artagnan bowed to Madame Bonacieux, darting at her the most loving glance that he could possibly concentrate upon her charming little person; and while he descended the stairs, he heard the door closed behind him and double-locked. In two bounds he was at the Louvre. As he entered the wicket of L'Échelle, ten o'clock struck. All the events we have just described had taken place within half an hour.

Everything happened as Madame Bonacieux said it would. On hearing the password, Germain bowed; ten minutes after La Porte was at the lodge; with two words D'Artagnan told him what was going on and informed him where Madame Bonacieux was. La Porte assured himself, by having it twice repeated, of the exact address, and set off at a run. He had, however, scarcely gone ten steps before he returned.

"Young man," said he to D'Artagnan, "I have a piece of advice to give you."

"What is it?"

"You may get into trouble by what has taken place."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. Have you any friend whose clock is too slow?"

"What then?"

"Go and call upon him, in order that he may give evidence of your having been with him at half-past nine. In law that is called an alibi."

D'Artagnan found this advice prudent; he took to his heels, and was soon at M. de Tréville's; but instead of going into the drawing-room with everybody, he asked to be introduced to M. de Tréville's office. As D'Artagnan was one of the frequenters of the hotel, no difficulty was made in complying with his request, and a servant went to inform M. de Tréville that his young compatriot, having something important to communicate, solicited a private audience. Five minutes after, M. de Tréville was asking D'Artagnan what he could do for him, and to what he was indebted for his visit at so late an hour.

"Pardon me, sir," said D'Artagnan, who had profited by the moment he had been left alone to put back M. de Tréville's clock three-quarters of an hour, "I thought, as it was yet only twenty-five minutes past nine, it was not too late to wait upon you."

"Twenty-five minutes past nine!" cried M. de Tréville, looking at the clock; "why, that's impossible!"

"Look, rather, sir," said D'Artagnan; "the clock shows it."

"That's true," said M. Tréville; "I should have thought it was later. But what can I do for you?"

Then D'Artagnan told M. de Tréville a long history about the queen. He expressed to him the fears he entertained with respect to her Majesty; he related to him what he had heard of the projects of the cardinal with regard to Buckingham; and all with a tranquillity and sereneness which deceived M. de Tréville the more because he had himself, as we have said, observed something new between the cardinal, the king, and the queen.

As ten o'clock was striking, D'Artagnan left M. de Tréville, who thanked him for his information, recommended him to have the service of the king and queen always at heart, and returned to the drawing-room. But at the foot of the stairs D'Artagnan remembered he had forgotten his cane; he consequently rushed up again, reëntered the office, with a turn of his finger set the clock right again, that they might not perceive the next day it had been tampered with, and, sure henceforth that he had a witness to prove his alibi, ran downstairs and soon gained the street.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

His visit to M. de Tréville being paid, D'Artagnan, quite thoughtful, took the longest way homewards.

Of what was D'Artagnan thinking, that he strayed thus from his path, gazing at the stars in the heavens, and sometimes sighing, sometimes smiling?

He was thinking of Madame Bonacieux. For an apprentice musketeer, the young woman was almost an ideal of love. Pretty, mysterious, initiated into almost all the secrets of the court, which reflected such a charming gravity over her pleasing features, he suspected her of not being insensible to wooing, which is an irresistible charm for novices in love; besides, D'Artagnan had delivered her from the hands of the demons who wished to search and maltreat her; and this important service had established between them one of

those sentiments of gratitude which so easily take on a more tender character.

So rapidly do our dreams move upon the wings of imagination, that D'Artagnan already fancied himself accosted by a messenger from the young woman, who brought him some note appointing a meeting, or a gold chain, or a diamond. We have observed that young cavaliers received presents from their king without shame: let us add that, in those times of lax morality, they had no more delicacy with respect to their mistresses, and that the latter almost always left them valuable and durable remembrances, as if they endeavored to conquer their fragile sentiments by solid gifts.

Men then made their way in the world by the means of women without blushing. Such as were only beautiful gave their beauty; whence, without doubt, comes the proverb, "That the most beautiful girl in the world can give no more than she has." Such as were rich gave, in addition, a part of their money; and a vast number of heroes of that gallant period may be cited who would neither have won their spurs in the first place, nor their battles afterwards, without the purse, more or less garnished, which the mistress fastened to the saddle-bow.

D'Artagnan possessed nothing. Provincial diffidence, that slight varnish, that ephemeral flower, that down of the peach, had been blown away by the unorthodox counsels which the three musketeers gave their friend. D'Artagnan, following the strange custom of the times, considered himself at Paris as on a campaign; neither more nor less than if he had been in Flanders — Spain yonder, woman here. In each there was an enemy to contend with, and contributions to be levied.

But, we must say, at the present moment D'Artagnan was governed by a much more noble and disinterested feeling. The mercer had told him he was rich: the young man might easily guess that, with so weak a man as M. Bonacieux, it was most likely the young wife kept the purse. But all this had had no influence at all upon the feeling produced by the sight of Madame Bonacieux, and self-interest remained almost entirely foreign to that commencement of love which had been the consequence of it. We say "almost entirely," for the idea that a young, handsome, kind, and witty woman is at the same time rich takes nothing from the charm of this beginning of love, but, on the contrary, strengthens it.

Affluence has a crowd of aristocratic cares and caprices which are highly becoming to beauty. A fine and white stock-

ing, a silk dress, a lace kerchief, a pretty slipper on the foot, a new ribbon on the head, do not make an ugly woman pretty, but they make a pretty woman beautiful, without reckoning her hands, which gain by all this: the hands, among women particularly, must be idle to be beautiful.

Then D'Artagnan, as the reader, from whom we have not concealed the condition of his fortune, very well knows,—D'Artagnan was not a millionaire; he hoped to become one some day, but the time which in his own mind he fixed upon for this happy change was still far distant. In the meanwhile, how disheartening to see the woman one loves long for those thousands of nothings which constitute a woman's happiness, and be unable to give her those thousand nothings! At least when the woman is rich and the lover is not, what he cannot offer her she offers to herself; and although it is generally with her husband's money that she procures herself this indulgence, the gratitude for it seldom reverts to him.

But D'Artagnan, disposed to become some day the most tender of lovers, was in the meantime a very devoted friend. In the midst of his amorous projects upon the mercer's wife, he did not forget his friends. The pretty Madame Bonacieux was just the woman to walk with in the plain of St. Denis, or in the fair of Saint-Germain, in company with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, to whom D'Artagnan would be so proud to display such a conquest. Then, when people walk for any length of time they become hungry, at least D'Artagnan had fancied so several times lately; and they could enjoy some of those little charming dinners in which we, on one side, touch the hand of a friend, and, on the other, the foot of a mistress. Besides, on pressing occasions, in extreme difficulties, D'Artagnan would become the preserver of his friends.

And Monsieur Bonacieux, whom D'Artagnan had pushed into the hands of the bailiffs, denying him aloud, although he had promised in a whisper to save him! We are compelled to admit to our readers that D'Artagnan thought nothing about him in any way; or that, if he did think of him, it was only to say to himself that he was very well where he was, wherever it might be. Love is the most selfish of all the passions.

Let our readers, however, be satisfied; if D'Artagnan forgets his host, or appears to forget him, under the pretence of not knowing where he has been taken to, we will not forget him, and we know where he is. But for the moment, let us do as the amorous Gascon did: we will look after the worthy mercer presently.

D'Artagnan, reflecting on his future loves, addressing himself to the beautiful night and smiling at the stars, went up the Rue Cherche-Midi, or Chasse-Midi, as it was then called. As he found himself in the quarter in which Aramis lived, he took it into his head to pay his friend a visit, in order to explain to him why he had sent Planchet to him, with a request that he would come instantly to the mouse-trap. Now, if Aramis was at home when Planchet came to his abode, he had doubtless hastened to the Rue des Fossoyeurs, and finding nobody but his two companions there, perhaps they would not be able to conceive, any of them, what all this meant. This result required an explanation; at least, so D'Artagnan thought.

And he likewise whispered to himself that he thought this was an opportunity for talking about pretty little Madame Bonacieux, of whom his head, if not his heart, was already full. We must never look for discretion in first love. First love is accompanied by such excessive joy that unless this joy is allowed to overflow, it will stifle you.

Paris for two hours past had been dark, and began to be deserted. All the clocks of the Faubourg Saint-Germain were striking eleven; it was delightful weather; D'Artagnan was passing along a lane upon the spot where the Rue d'Assas is now situated, respiring the balmy emanations which were borne upon the wind from the Rue Vaugirard, and which arose from the gardens refreshed by the dews of evening and the breeze of night. From a distance resounded, deadened, however, by good shutters, the songs of the tipplers enjoying themselves in the scattered saloons of the plain. When he reached the end of the lane, D'Artagnan turned to the left. The house in which Aramis dwelt was situated between the Rue Cassette and the Rue Servandoni.

D'Artagnan had just passed the Rue Cassette, and already caught sight of the door of his friend's house, shaded by a mass of sycamores and clematis, which formed a vast arch above it, when he perceived something like a shadow issuing from the Rue Servandoni. This something was enveloped in a cloak, and D'Artagnan at first believed it was a man; but by the smallness of the form, the hesitation of the gait, and the indecision of the step, he soon discovered that it was a woman. Further, this woman, as if not certain of the house she was seeking, lifted up her eyes to look around her, stopped, went a little back, and then returned again. D'Artagnan was perplexed.

"Suppose I were to go and offer her my services!" thought

he. "By her step she must be young, perhaps pretty. Oh! yes. But a woman who wanders about the streets at this hour seldom does so but to meet her lover. Bah! to go and disturb a rendezvous would not be the best means of commencing an acquaintance."

The young woman, however, continued advancing slowly, counting the houses and windows. This was neither a long nor a difficult affair; there were but three mansions in this part of the street, and two windows looking out upon that street, and one of them was the window of a pavilion parallel to that which Aramis occupied; the other was Aramis's own window.

"Zounds!" said D'Artagnan to himself, whose mind reverted to the niece of the theologian, "Zounds! it would be droll if this belated flying dove should be in search of our friend's house. But, by my soul, that seems more than probable. Ah! my dear friend Aramis, this time I will find you out."

And D'Artagnan, making himself as small as he could, concealed himself on the darkest side of the street, near a stone bench placed at the back of a niche.

The young woman continued to advance, for, in addition to the lightness of her step, which had betrayed her, she had just given a slight cough which betrayed a clear, sweet voice. D'Artagnan believed this cough to be a signal.

Nevertheless, whether this cough had been answered by an equivalent signal which had driven away the hesitation of the nocturnal seeker, or whether she had recognized that she had arrived at the end of her journey, she boldly drew near to Aramis's shutter, and tapped at three equal intervals with her bent finger.

"She is certainly looking for Aramis," murmured D'Artagnan. "Ah! master hypocrite! this is the way you study theology, is it?"

The three blows were scarcely struck when the inside casement was opened, and a light appeared through the panes of the shutter.

"Ah! ah!" said the listener, "not through doors, but through windows! Ah! ah! this was an expected visit. We shall see the windows open, and the lady enter by escalade! Very pretty!"

But to the great astonishment of D'Artagnan, the shutter remained closed. Moreover, the light which had shone out for an instant disappeared, and all was dark again.

D'Artagnan thought this could not last long, and continued to look with all his eyes, and listen with all his ears.

He was right: at the end of some seconds two sharp taps were heard on the inside; the young woman of the street replied by a single tap, and the shutter was opened a little way.

Judge whether D'Artagnan looked or listened eagerly. Unfortunately the light had been removed into another chamber. But the eyes of the young man were accustomed to the night. Besides, the eyes of Gascons, like those of cats, possess, it is said, the faculty of seeing in the dark.

D'Artagnan then saw that the young woman took from her pocket a white object which she unfolded quickly, and which took the form of a handkerchief. She made her interlocutor look at the corner of this unfolded object.

This immediately recalled to D'Artagnan's mind the handkerchief he had found at the feet of Madame Bonacieux, which had reminded him of the one he had dragged from under Aramis's foot.

"What the devil could that handkerchief mean?"

Placed where he was, D'Artagnan could not see the face of Aramis; we say the face of Aramis, because the young man entertained no doubt that it was his friend who held this dialogue inside with the lady outside; curiosity prevailed over prudence, and taking advantage of the preoccupation in which the sight of the handkerchief appeared to have plunged the two personages now on the scene, he stole from his hiding-place, and quick as lightning, but stepping with the utmost caution, he went and placed himself close to the angle of the wall, from which his eye could plunge into the interior of the apartment.

Upon gaining this advantage, D'Artagnan came near uttering a cry of surprise: it was not Aramis who was conversing with the nocturnal visitor, it was a woman! D'Artagnan, however, could only see enough to recognize the form of her vestments, not enough to distinguish her features.

At the same instant the woman of the apartment drew a second handkerchief from her pocket, and exchanged it for the one which had just been shown to her. Then some words were pronounced by the two women. At length the shutter was closed; the woman who was outside the window turned round, and passed within four steps of D'Artagnan, pulling down the hood of her cloak; but the precaution was too late. D'Artagnan had already recognized Madame Bonacieux.

Madame Bonacieux! the suspicion that it was she had

crossed the mind of D'Artagnan when she drew the handkerchief from her pocket; but what probability was there that Madame Bonacieux, who had sent for M. de La Porte in order to be led back to the Louvre, should be running about the streets of Paris at half-past eleven at night, at the risk of being carried off a second time?

It must be, then, for some very important affair; and what is the affair of the greatest importance to a pretty woman of twenty-five? Love.

But was it on her own account or on account of another person that she exposed herself to such risks? This was a question the young man asked himself, the demon of jealousy already gnawing at his heart, neither more nor less than at the heart of an accepted lover.

There was, besides, a very simple means of satisfying himself where Madame Bonacieux was going: this was to follow her. The means was so simple that D'Artagnan employed it quite naturally and instinctively.

But at the sight of the young man, who came out from his wall like a statue walking from its niche, and at the noise of the steps which she heard resound behind her, Madame Bonacieux uttered a little cry and fled.

D'Artagnan ran after her. It was not a very difficult thing for him to overtake a woman embarrassed with her cloak. He came up to her before she had traversed a third of the street. The unfortunate woman was exhausted, not by fatigue, but by terror, and when D'Artagnan placed his hand upon her shoulder, she sank upon one knee, crying in a choking voice:

"Kill me, if you will, — you shall know nothing!"

D'Artagnan raised her by passing his arm round her waist; but as he felt by her weight she was on the point of fainting, he made haste to reassure her by protestations of devotion. These protestations were nothing for Madame Bonacieux, for such protestations may be made with the worst intentions in the world; but the voice was all. The young woman thought she recognized the sound of that voice; she opened her eyes, cast a quick glance upon the man who had terrified her so, and, at once perceiving it was D'Artagnan, she uttered a cry of joy.

"Oh! it is you! it is you! thank God! thank God!"

"Yes, it is I!" said D'Artagnan, "it is I, whom God has sent to watch over you."

"Was it with that intention you followed me?" asked the young woman, with a coquettish smile, whose somewhat

bantering character resumed its influence, and whose fear had wholly disappeared from the moment when she recognized a friend in one whom she had taken for an enemy.

"No," said D'Artagnan; "no, — I confess it, — it was chance that threw me in your way; I saw a female knocking at the window of one of my friends."

"Of one of your friends?" interrupted Madame Bonacieux.

"Without doubt; Aramis is one of my most intimate friends."

"Aramis! who is he?"

"Come, come, you won't tell me you don't know Aramis?"

"This is the first time I ever heard his name."

"This is the first time, then, that you ever went to that house?"

"Certainly it is."

"And you did not know that it was inhabited by a young man?"

"No."

"By a musketeer?"

"Not at all."

"It was not he, then, you came to find?"

"Not the least in the world. Besides, you must have seen that the person I spoke to was a woman."

"That is true; but this woman may be one of the friends of Aramis."

"I know nothing of that."

"Since she occupies his apartment."

"That does not concern me."

"But who is she?"

"Oh! that is not my secret."

"My dear Madame Bonacieux, you are charming; but at the same time you are the most mysterious of women."

"Do I lose much by that?"

"No; you are, on the contrary, adorable!"

"Give me your arm, then."

"Most willingly. And now?"

"Now take me with you."

"Where?"

"Where I am going."

"But where are you going?"

"You will see, because you will leave me at the door."

"Shall I wait for you?"

"That will be useless."

"You will return alone, then?"

"Perhaps I may, perhaps I may not."

"But will the person who will afterwards accompany you be a man or a woman?"

"I don't know yet."

"But I will know it!"

"How?"

"I will wait for your coming out."

"In that case, adieu!"

"Why so?"

"I do not want you."

"But you had demanded —"

"The aid of a gentleman, not the watchfulness of a spy."

"That word is rather hard."

"How are they called who follow other people in spite of them?"

"They are indiscreet."

"The word is too mild."

"Well, madame, I perceive I must act in accordance with your wishes."

"Why did you deprive yourself of the merit of doing so at once?"

"Is there no merit in repentance?"

"And you do really repent?"

"I know nothing about that myself. But what I know is, that I promise to do all you wish if you will allow me to accompany you where you are going."

"And you will leave me afterwards?"

"Yes."

"Without waiting for my coming out again?"

"No."

"On your honor?"

"By the faith of a gentleman."

"Take my arm, then, and let us go on."

D'Artagnan offered his arm to Madame Bonacieux, who took it, half laughing, half trembling, and both went up Rue la Harpe. When they reached there the young woman seemed to hesitate, as she had before done in the Rue Vaugirard. Nevertheless, by certain signs, she appeared to recognize a door; and approaching that door —

"And now, sir," said she, "it is here I have business; a thousand thanks for your honorable company, which has saved me from all the dangers to which, alone, I might have been exposed. But the moment has come for you to keep your word; I have reached the place of my destination."

"And you will have nothing more to fear on your return?"

"I shall have nothing to fear but robbers."

"And is that nothing?"

"What could they take from me?—I have not a farthing about me."

"You forget that beautiful embroidered handkerchief, with the coat of arms."

"Which one?"

"The one which I found at your feet, and put back into your pocket!"

"Silence! silence! imprudent man!" cried the young woman. "Do you wish to ruin me?"

"You see very plainly that there is still danger for you, since a single word makes you tremble; and you confess that if that word were heard you would be ruined. Come, come, madame!" cried D'Artagnan, seizing her hand and surveying her with an ardent glance; "come! be more generous—trust in me; have you not read in my eyes that there is nothing but devotion and sympathy in my heart?"

"Yes," replied Madame Bonacieux; "therefore ask me my own secrets, and I will tell them to you; but those of others—that is quite another thing."

"Very well," said D'Artagnan. "I shall discover them; as these secrets may have an influence over your life, these secrets must become mine."

"Beware of what you do!" cried the young woman, in a manner so serious that it made D'Artagnan start in spite of himself. "Oh! meddle in nothing which concerns me; do not seek to assist me in what I am accomplishing. And this I ask of you in the name of the interest with which I inspire you, in the name of the service you have rendered me, and which I never shall forget while I have life. Rather place faith in what I tell you. No longer concern yourself about me; I exist no longer for you, any more than if you had never seen me."

"Must Aramis also do the same, madame?" said D'Artagnan, piqued.

"This is the second or third time, sir, that you have repeated that name, and yet I have told you that I do not know him."

"You do not know the man at whose shutter you went and knocked? Indeed, madame, you think me altogether too credulous!"

"Confess, now, that it is for the sake of making me talk that you invent this story and create this personage."

"I invent nothing, madame; I create nothing; I only speak the exact truth."

"And you say that one of your friends lives in that house."

"I say so, and I repeat it for the third time: in that house lives one of my friends; and that friend is Aramis."

"All this will be cleared up at a later period," murmured the young woman; "now, sir, be silent."

"If you could see my heart," said D'Artagnan, "you would there read in it so much curiosity that you would pity me, and so much love that you would instantly satisfy my curiosity. We have nothing to fear from those who love us."

"You speak very soon of love, sir!" said the young woman, shaking her head.

"That is because love has come suddenly upon me, and for the first time; and because I am not twenty years old."

The young woman looked at him furtively.

"Listen: I am already upon the scent," resumed D'Artagnan. "About three months ago I was near fighting a duel with Aramis, concerning a handkerchief resembling the one you showed the woman in his house; concerning a handkerchief marked in the same manner, I am sure."

"Sir," said the young woman, "you tire me very much, I assure you, by your questions."

"But you, madame! Prudent as you are, think, if you were to be arrested with that handkerchief on you and that handkerchief were to be seized, would you not be compromised?"

"In what way? Are not the initials mine? — C. B. — Constance Bonacieux?"

"Or Camille de Bois-Tracy."

"Silence, sir! once again, silence! Ah! since the dangers I incur on my own account cannot stop you, think of those you may yourself run!"

"Danger for me?"

"Yes; there is risk of imprisonment, risk of life, in knowing me."

"Then I will leave you no more."

"Sir!" said the young woman, supplicating him and clasping her hands together, "sir, in the name of heaven, by a soldier's honor, by the courtesy of a gentleman, depart! — there! —hear midnight striking! — that is the hour at which I am expected."

"Madame," said the young man, bowing, "I can refuse nothing asked of me thus. Be satisfied — I will go."

"But you will not follow me — you will not watch me?"

"I will return home instantly."

"Ah! I was quite sure you were an excellent young man," said Madame Bonacieux, holding out her hand to him, and placing the other upon the knocker of a little door almost hidden in the wall.

D'Artagnan seized the hand that was held out to him, and kissed it ardently.

"Ah! I wish I had never seen you!" cried D'Artagnan, with that ingenuous roughness which women often prefer to the affectations of politeness, because it reveals the entire thought, and proves that feeling prevails over reason.

"Well!" resumed Madame Bonacieux, in a voice that was almost caressing, and pressing the hand of D'Artagnan, who had not let go of hers, "well! I will not say what you do: what is lost for to-day may not be lost forever. Who knows, when I shall be some day at liberty, whether I may not satisfy your curiosity?"

"And will you make the same promise to my love?" cried D'Artagnan, beside himself with joy.

"Oh! as to that, I will not engage myself: that depends upon the sentiments you may inspire me with."

"So to-day, madame, —"

"Oh! to-day, I have got no further than gratitude."

"Ah! you are too charming," said D'Artagnan, sorrowfully; "and you abuse my love."

"No, I make use of your generosity, that's all. But be of good cheer; with certain people everything comes round all right."

"Oh! you make me the happiest of men! Do not forget this evening — do not forget your promise."

"Be satisfied: at the proper time and place I will remember everything. Well, now then, go! go, in the name of heaven! I was expected exactly at midnight, and I am late."

"By five minutes."

"Yes; but in certain circumstances, five minutes are five centuries."

"When one loves."

"Well! and who told you I had not to do with some one in love!"

"It is a man, then, that expects you?" cried D'Artagnan; "a man!"

"Come! come! the discussion is going to begin again!" said Madame Bonacieux, with a half smile which was not free from a certain tinge of impatience.

"No, no; I am going, I am going! I believe in you, and I

would have all the merit of my devotion, even though that devotion were a stupidity. Adieu, madame, adieu!"

And as if he felt that only a violent effort would give him the strength to detach himself from the hand he held, he sprang away, running, while Madame Bonacieux knocked, as she had done at the shutter, three slow regular taps; then, when he had gained the corner of the street, he looked around: the door had been opened and shut again — the mercer's pretty wife had disappeared.

D'Artagnan pursued his way; he had given his word not to watch Madame Bonacieux, and if his life had depended upon the place to which she was going, or the person who should accompany her, D'Artagnan would still have returned home, since he had promised that he would do so. In five minutes he was in the Rue des Fossoyeurs.

"Poor Athos!" said he; "he will never guess what all this means. He must have fallen asleep waiting for me, or else he must have returned home, where he will have learned that a woman had been there. A woman at Athos's house! After all," continued D'Artagnan, "there was certainly one in Aramis's house. All this is very strange; I should like to know how it will all end."

"Badly, sir, — badly!" replied a voice, which the young man recognized as Planchet's; for soliloquizing aloud, as very preoccupied people do, he had entered the alley at the end of which were the stairs which led to his chamber.

"How badly? What do you mean by that, you stupid fellow?" asked D'Artagnan; "what has happened, then?"

"All sorts of misfortunes."

"What?"

"In the first place, M. Athos is arrested."

"Arrested! Athos arrested! What for?"

"He was found in your lodging — they took him for you."

"And who arrested him?"

"The guard brought by the men in black whom you put to flight."

"Why did he not tell them his name? Why did he not tell them he knew nothing about this affair?"

"He took care not to do so, sir: on the contrary, he came up to me, and said, 'It is your master who needs his liberty at this moment, and not I, since he knows everything and I know nothing. They will believe he is arrested, and that will give him time; in three days I will tell them who I am, and they cannot fail to set me at liberty again."

"Bravo, Athos! noble heart!" murmured D'Artagnan. "I know him well there! And what did the bailiffs do?"

"Four of them led him away, I don't know where — to the Bastille or For l'Evêque. Two remained with the men in black, who rummaged everywhere — and took all the papers. The last two mounted guard at the door during this examination; then, when all was over, they went away, leaving the house empty and the doors open."

"And Porthos and Aramis?"

"I could not find them; they did not come."

"But they may come at any moment, for you left word that I was expecting them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, don't stir from here then; if they come, tell them what has happened. Let them wait for me at the Pomme de Pin; here it would be dangerous — the house may be watched. I will run to M. de Tréville's to tell him all this, and will join them there."

"Very well, sir," said Planchet.

"But you will remain, will you not? You are not afraid?" said D'Artagnan, coming back to encourage his lackey.

"Be satisfied, sir," said Planchet; "you do not know me yet. I am brave when I am set about it — the difficulty lies wholly in starting; besides, I am a Picard."

"Then that's understood," said D'Artagnan; "you will be killed rather than desert your post?"

"Yes, sir; and there is nothing I would not do to prove my attachment to you."

"Good!" said D'Artagnan to himself. "It appears that the method I have adopted with this fellow is decidedly a good one; I shall employ it upon occasion."

And his legs, already a little fatigued with running about during the day, carried D'Artagnan as fast as they could towards the Rue du Colombier.

M. de Tréville was not at his hôtel; his company was on guard at the Louvre; he was at the Louvre with his company.

He must get at M. de Tréville; it was important that he should be informed of what was going on. D'Artagnan resolved to endeavor to get into the Louvre. His costume of a guard in the company of M. des Essarts would, he thought, be a passport for him.

He therefore went down the Rue des Petits Augustins, and walked up the quay, in order to reach the Pont Neuf. He had had for a moment the idea of passing over by the

ferry-boat; but on gaining the river-side, he had mechanically put his hand into his pocket, and perceived that he had not the wherewithal to pay the ferryman.

As he was arriving at the end of the Rue Guénégaud, he saw, coming out of the Rue Dauphine, two persons whose appearance struck his attention. One was a man, and the other a woman.

The woman had Madame Bonacieux's figure, and the man resembled Aramis so much as to be mistaken for him.

Besides, the woman had on that black cloak, which D'Artagnan could still see outlined upon the shutter of the Rue de Vaugirard, and upon the door of the Rue de la Harpe.

And still further, the man wore the uniform of the musketeers.

The woman's hood was pulled down, and the man held his handkerchief up to his face; both, as this double precaution indicated, — both had an interest, then, in not being recognized.

They followed the bridge. That was D'Artagnan's road, since D'Artagnan was going to the Louvre. D'Artagnan followed them.

He had not gone twenty steps before he became convinced that the woman was really Madame Bonacieux, and the man Aramis.

He felt at that instant all the suspicions of jealousy agitating his heart.

He was doubly betrayed — by his friend, and by her whom he already loved as a mistress. Madame Bonacieux had sworn by all that was holy that she did not know Aramis; and a quarter of an hour after she had taken this oath, he found her hanging on Aramis's arm.

D'Artagnan did not reflect at all that he had known the mercer's pretty wife for three hours only; that she owed him nothing but a little gratitude for having delivered her from the men in black who wished to carry her off; and that she had promised him nothing. He considered himself to be an outraged, betrayed, and ridiculed lover. The blood mounted angrily to his face — he resolved to unravel the mystery.

The young man and woman had perceived they were followed, and had redoubled their speed. D'Artagnan hastened on, passed them, then turned on them at the moment they were before the Samaritaine, which was illuminated by a lamp that threw its light over all this part of the bridge.

D'Artagnan stopped before them, and they stopped before him.

"What do you want, sir?" demanded the musketeer, drawing back a step, and with a foreign accent which proved to D'Artagnan that he was deceived in one part of his conjectures at least.

"It is not Aramis!" cried he.

"No, sir, it is not Aramis; and by your exclamation I perceive you have mistaken me for another, and pardon you."

"You pardon me!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Yes," replied the unknown. "Allow me, then, to pass on, since it is not with me you have anything to do."

"You are right, sir, it is not with you I have anything to do: it is with madame, here."

"With madame! You do not know her!" replied the stranger.

"You are mistaken, sir; I know her very well."

"Ah," said Madame Bonacieux, in a tone of reproach, "ah, sir, I had the promise of a soldier and the word of a gentleman: I thought I might have depended upon them!"

"And I, madame!" said D'Artagnan, embarrassed; "you promised me —"

"Take my arm, madame," said the stranger, "and let us proceed on our way."

D'Artagnan, however, stupefied, cast down, annihilated by all that had happened, stood, with his arms crossed, before the musketeer and Madame Bonacieux.

The musketeer advanced a step or two, and pushed D'Artagnan aside with his hand.

D'Artagnan made a spring backwards, and drew his sword.

At the same time, and with the rapidity of lightning, the unknown drew his.

"In the name of heaven, milord!" cried Madame Bonacieux, throwing herself between the combatants, and seizing the swords with her hands.

"Milord!" cried D'Artagnan, enlightened by a sudden idea, "milord! Pardon me, sir, but are you not —"

"Milord, the Duke of Buckingham!" said Madame Bonacieux in an undertone; "and now you may ruin us all."

"Milord — madame — I ask a hundred pardons! but I love her, milord, and was jealous; you know what it is to love, milord. Pardon me, and then tell me how I can risk my life to serve your Grace?"

"You are a good young man!" said Buckingham, holding out his hand to D'Artagnan, who pressed it respectfully. "You offer me your services: I accept them. Follow us at a

distance of twenty paces to the Louvre, and if any one watches us, slay him!"

D'Artagnan placed his naked sword under his arm, allowed the duke and Madame Bonacieux to proceed twenty steps, and then followed them, ready to carry out to the letter the instructions of the noble and elegant minister of Charles I.

But fortunately the young seid had no opportunity to give the duke this proof of his devotion, and the young woman and the handsome musketeer entered the Louvre by the wicket of L'Échelle, without any interference.

As for D'Artagnan, he immediately repaired to the tavern of the Pomme-de-Pin, where he found Porthos and Aramis, who were waiting for him. But, without giving them any explanation of the inconvenience he had caused them, he told them that he had himself terminated the affair in which he had thought for a moment he should need their assistance.

And now, carried away as we are by our story, we must leave our three friends to return each to his own home, and follow the Duke of Buckingham and his guide through the windings of the Louvre.

CHAPTER XII.

GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

Madame Bonacieux and the duke entered the Louvre without difficulty. Madame Bonacieux was known to belong to the queen; the duke wore the uniform of the musketeers of M. de Tréville, who, as we have said, were that evening on guard. Besides, Germain was in the interests of the queen, and, if anything should happen, Madame Bonacieux would only be accused of having introduced her lover into the Louvre. She took the risk upon herself; to be sure her reputation was jeopardized, but of what value in society was the reputation of the mercer's pretty wife?

Once within the interior of the court, the duke and the young woman kept along the side of the wall for about twenty-five steps. This space passed, Madame Bonacieux pushed a little side-door, open by day, but generally closed at night. The door yielded. Both entered, and found themselves in darkness. But Madame Bonacieux was acquainted with all the turnings and windings of this part of the Louvre, set apart for the royal attendants. She closed the door after him, took the

duke by the hand, advanced a little, feeling her way, came to a balustrade, put her foot upon the bottom step, and began to ascend a flight of stairs. The duke counted two stories. She then turned to the right, followed a long corridor, descended a flight of steps, went a few steps further, introduced a key into a lock, opened a door, and pushed the duke into an apartment lighted only by a night lamp, saying, "Remain here, my Lord Duke; some one will soon come." She then went out by the same door, which she locked, so that the duke found himself literally a prisoner.

Nevertheless, isolated as he was, we must say that the Duke of Buckingham did not experience a moment's fear. One of the salient points of his character was the search of adventures and a love of the romantic. Brave, bold, enterprising, this was not the first time he had risked his life in such attempts. He had learned that the pretended message from Anne of Austria, upon the faith of which he had come to Paris, was a snare, but instead of going back to England, he had, taking undue advantage of the position in which he had been placed, declared to the queen that he would not go back again without having seen her. The queen had at first positively refused, but at length became afraid that the duke, if exasperated, would commit some rash deed. She had already decided upon seeing him and urging his immediate departure, when, on the very evening of coming to this decision, Madame Bonacieux, who was charged with going to fetch the duke and conducting him to the Louvre, was carried off. During two days it was not known what had become of her, and everything remained in suspense. But when once free, and placed in communication with La Porte, matters resumed their course, and she accomplished the perilous enterprise which, but for her abduction, would have been executed three days earlier.

Buckingham, on being left alone, walked towards a mirror. His musketeer's uniform became him wonderfully well.

At thirty-five, which was then his age, he rightly passed for the handsomest gentleman and the most elegant cavalier in France or England.

The favorite of two kings, immensely rich, all-powerful in a kingdom which he threw into disorder at his fancy and calmed again at his caprice, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, had undertaken to live one of those fabled existences which survive in the course of centuries as an astonishment to posterity.

Therefore, sure of himself, convinced of his own power,

certain that the laws which rule other men could not reach him, he went straight at the goal he had set for himself, even though this goal were so elevated and so dazzling that it would have been madness for any other even to have contemplated it. In this way he had succeeded in gaining access several times to the beautiful and haughty Anne of Austria, and in making himself loved by her, by dazzling her.

George Villiers placed himself then before the mirror, as we have said, restored to his beautiful hair the curls which the weight of his hat had disordered, twisted his moustache, and, with a heart swelling with joy, happy and proud on approaching the moment he had so long sighed for, he smiled upon himself with pride and hope.

At this instant a door concealed in the tapestry was opened, and a woman appeared. Buckingham saw this apparition in the glass; he uttered a cry — it was the queen!

Anne of Austria was then twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age — that is to say, she was in the full splendor of her beauty.

Her carriage was that of a queen or a goddess; her eyes, which reflected emerald hues, were perfectly beautiful, and yet were, at the same time, full of sweetness and majesty.

Her mouth was small and rosy, and although her under lip, like that of the princes of the house of Austria, protruded slightly beyond the other, it was eminently lovely in its smile, but also profoundly disdainful in its contempt.

Her skin was admired for its velvety softness, her hands and arms were of surpassing beauty. All the poets of the time sang of them as incomparable.

Lastly, her hair, which, from being light in her youth, had become chestnut, and which she wore in loose curls, and with much powder, admirably set off her face, in which the most rigid critic could only have desired a little less rouge, and the most fastidious sculptor a more delicate chiselled nose.

Buckingham remained for a moment dazzled. Never had Anne of Austria appeared to him so beautiful, amid balls, fêtes, or tournaments, as she appeared to him at this moment, dressed in a simple robe of white satin, and accompanied by Doña Estafana, the only one of her Spanish women that had not been driven from her by the jealousy of the king, or by the persecutions of Richelieu.

Anne of Austria advanced two steps. Buckingham threw himself at her feet, and, before the queen could prevent him, kissed the hem of her robe.

"Duke, you already know that it is not I who caused you to be written to."

"Yes, yes, madame! yes, your Majesty!" cried the duke; "I know that I must have been mad, senseless, to believe that snow would become animated or marble warm; but what then? They who love, easily believe in love; besides, this journey is not wholly lost, since I see you."

"Yes," replied Anne; "but you know why and how I see you, milord! Because, insensible to all my sufferings, you persist in remaining in a city where, by remaining, you run the risk of your own life, and make me run the risk of losing my honor. I see you to tell you that everything separates us, the depths of the sea, the enmity of kingdoms, the sanctity of vows. It is sacrilege to struggle against so many things, milord. In short, I see you to tell you that we must never see each other again."

"Speak on, madame, speak on, queen," said Buckingham; "the sweetness of your voice covers the harshness of your words. You talk of sacrilege! but the sacrilege lies in the separation of two hearts formed by God for each other."

"Milord," cried the queen, "you forget that I have never told you I loved you."

"But you have never told me that you did not love me, and, truly, to speak such words to me would be, on the part of your Majesty, too great an ingratitude. For, tell me, where can you find a love like mine, a love which neither time, nor absence, nor despair can extinguish; a love which contents itself with a lost ribbon, a stray look, or a chance word? It is now three years, madame, since I saw you for the first time, and during those three years I have loved you in this way.

"Shall I tell you how you were dressed the first time I saw you? shall I describe to you every one of the ornaments you wore? Mark! I see you now! You were seated upon cushions, in the Spanish fashion; you wore a robe of green satin embroidered with gold and silver, with hanging sleeves fastened upon your beautiful arms, upon those lovely arms, with large diamonds. You wore a close ruff, a small cap upon your head, of the same color as your dress, and in that cap a heron's feather.

"Oh, madame! madame! I shut my eyes, and I can see you such as you then were: I open them again, and I see you such as you are now — a hundred times still more beautiful!"

"What folly!" murmured Anne of Austria, who had not the courage to find fault with the duke for having so well

preserved her portrait in his heart; "what folly to feed a useless passion with such memories!"

"And upon what then must I live? I have nothing but memories. They are my happiness, my treasures, my hopes. Every time that I see you is a fresh diamond which I enclose in the casket of my heart. This is the fourth which you have let fall and I have picked up. For, in three years, madame, I have only seen you four times; the first, which I have just described to you, the second at the mansion of Madame de Chevreuse, the third in the gardens at Amiens."

"Duke," said the queen, blushing, "never name that evening."

"Oh, yes! let me speak of it — on the contrary, let me speak of it, madame. That was the happiest and most radiant evening of my life! Do you not remember what a beautiful night it was? How soft and perfumed the air, and how lovely the blue star-enamelled sky?

"Ah! that time, madame, I was able for one instant to be alone with you. That time you were about to tell me all, the isolation of your life, the griefs of your heart. You leaned upon my arm; upon this one, madame. I felt, in bending my head towards you, your beautiful hair touch my cheek, and every time that it did touch me, I trembled from head to foot. Oh, queen, queen! you do not know what felicity from heaven, what joys from Paradise, are comprised in a moment like that. I would give all my wealth, all my fortune, all my glory, all the days I have to live, for such an instant, for a night like that! For that night, madame, that night you loved me, I will swear it."

"Milord, yes, it is possible that the influence of the place, the charm of the beautiful evening, the fascination of your look, the thousand circumstances, in short, which sometimes unite to ruin a woman, were grouped around me on that fatal evening. But, milord, you saw the queen come to the aid of the woman who was beginning to yield. At the first word you dared to utter, at the first freedom to which I had to reply, I summoned my attendants."

"Yes, yes! that is true; and any other love but mine would have sunk beneath this ordeal, but my love came out from it more ardent and more eternal. You believed you should fly from me by returning to Paris, you believed that I should not dare to quit the treasure over which my master had charged me to watch. What to me were all the treasures in the world, or all the kings of the earth! A week later I was back again, madame. That time you had nothing to say to me. I had

risked my life and my favor to see you but for a second. I did not even touch your hand, and you pardoned me on seeing me so submissive and so repentant."

"Yes, but calumny seized upon all those follies in which I took no part, as you well know, milord. The king, excited by the cardinal, made a terrible scandal. Madame de Vernet was driven from me, Putange was exiled, Madame de Chevreuse fell into disgrace, and when you wished to come back as ambassador to France, the king himself, remember, milord, the king himself opposed it."

"Yes, and France is about to pay for her king's refusal with a war. I am not allowed to see you, madame. Very well! I wish that each day you should hear me spoken of. What object, think you, have this expedition to Ré and this league with the Protestants of Rochelle which I am planning? The pleasure of seeing you.

"I have no hope of penetrating, sword in hand, to Paris — I know that well. But this war may bring about a peace, this peace will require a negotiator: I will be that negotiator. They will not dare to refuse me then, and I shall return to Paris and I shall see you, and shall be happy for an instant. Thousands of men, it is true, will have to pay for my happiness with their lives, but what will that signify to me, provided I see you again! All this is perhaps madness, folly, but tell me what woman has a lover more truly in love? what queen has a more ardent servant?"

"Milord! milord! you invoke in your defence things which accuse you more strongly. Milord, all these proofs of love that you desire to give me are little better than crimes."

"Because you do not love me, madame. If you loved me you would see all this differently. If you loved me, oh! if you loved me, that would be too great happiness, and I should go mad. Ah! Madame de Chevreuse, of whom you spoke just now, Madame de Chevreuse was less cruel than you. Holland loved her, and she responded to his love."

"Madame de Chevreuse was not a queen," murmured Anne of Austria, overcome in spite of herself by the expression of so profound a passion.

"You would love me, then, if you were not a queen! Madame, you say that you would love me then? I am then to believe that it is the dignity of your rank alone that makes you cruel to me. I may then believe that if you had been Madame de Chevreuse, poor Buckingham might have hoped? Thanks for

those sweet words! oh, my lovely queen! A hundred times, thanks!"

"Oh! milord! you have misconceived, wrongly interpreted; I did not mean —"

"Silence! silence!" cried the duke. "If I am happy in an error, do not have the cruelty to deprive me of it. You have told me yourself, madame, that I have been drawn into a snare; and I, perhaps, shall leave my life in it, for, strangely enough, I have for some time had a presentiment that I shall shortly die." And the duke smiled, with a smile at once sad and charming.

"Oh! my God!" cried Anne of Austria, with an accent of terror which proved how much greater was the interest she took in the duke than she ventured to tell.

"I do not tell you this, madame, to terrify you; no, what I say to you is even ridiculous, and, believe me, I do not heed such dreams. But the words you have just spoken, the hope you have almost given me, will have richly paid for all — were it even my life."

"Oh! but I," said Anne, "I, duke, have had presentiments likewise, I have had dreams. I dreamed that I saw you lying bleeding, wounded."

"In the left side, was it not, and with a knife!" interrupted Buckingham.

"Yes, it was so, milord, it was so, in the left side, and with a knife. Who can possibly have told you I had had that dream? I have imparted it to no one but my God, and only then in my prayers."

"I ask for no more. You love me, madame! It is enough."

"I love you! I?"

"Yes, yes. Would God send the same dreams to you as to me, if you did not love me? Should we have the same presentiments, if our existences did not meet in our hearts? You love me, my queen, and you will weep for me?"

"Oh! my God! my God!" cried Anne of Austria, "this is more than I can bear! In the name of heaven, duke, leave me, go! I do not know whether I love you or do not love you, but what I know is, that I will not be a perjured woman. Take pity on me, then, and go. Oh! if you are struck in France, if you die in France, if I could imagine that your love for me was the cause of your death, nothing could ever console me — I should go mad. Depart then, go, I implore you!"

"Oh! how beautiful you are so! Oh! how I love you!" said Buckingham.

"Oh! but go, go back! I implore you, and return later on. Come as ambassador, come as minister, come surrounded with guards who will defend you, with servants who will watch over you, and then — then I shall no longer fear for your life, and I shall be happy in seeing you again."

"Oh! is this true, is what you say true?"

"Yes."

"Then, some pledge of your indulgence, some object which, coming from you, may assure me that I have not dreamed; something you have worn, and that I may wear in my turn, — a ring, a necklace, a chain."

"Will you go then, will you go, if I give you what you ask for?"

"Yes."

"This very instant?"

"Yes."

"You will leave France, you will return to England?"

"I will, I swear to you I will."

"Wait, then, wait."

And Anne of Austria went into her apartment, and came out again almost immediately, holding a casket in her hand made of rosewood, with her monogram incrusted in gold.

"Here, milord, here," said she, "keep this in memory of me."

Buckingham took the casket, and fell a second time on his knees.

"You promised me you would go back," said the queen.

"And I keep my word. Your hand, madame, your hand, and I depart."

Anne of Austria stretched forth her hand, closing her eyes, and leaned the other upon Estafana, for she felt her strength was about to fail her.

Buckingham pressed his lips passionately to that beautiful hand, and then rising said:

"Within six months, if I am not dead, I shall have seen you again, madame, even if I have upset the whole world for it."

And, faithful to the promise he had made, he rushed out of the apartment.

In the corridor he met Madame Bonacieux, who was waiting for him, and who, with the same precautions and the same good fortune, led him out of the Louvre.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONSIEUR BONACIEUX.

THERE was in all this, as may have been noticed, one personage of whom, notwithstanding his precarious position, we have appeared to take but very little notice. This personage was M. Bonacieux, the respectable martyr of the political and amorous intrigues which were getting into such a tangle in this gallant and chivalric period.

Fortunately, as the reader may remember, or may not remember, fortunately, we promised not to lose sight of him.

The officers who had arrested him conducted him straight to the Bastille, where, all of a tremble, he was made to pass before a platoon of soldiers who were loading their muskets.

Thence, introduced into a half-subterranean gallery, he became, on the part of those who had brought him, the object of the grossest insults and the harshest treatment. The bailiffs perceived that they had not to deal with a nobleman, and they treated him like a very beggar.

At the end of half an hour, or thereabouts, an officer came to put an end to his tortures, but not to his anxiety, by giving the order to lead M. Bonacieux to the examination chamber.

Ordinarily, prisoners were questioned in their own cells, but with M. Bonacieux they did not use so many formalities.

Two guards took hold of the mercer, made him cross a court, enter a corridor in which were three sentinels, then opened a door and pushed him unceremoniously into a low room, the whole furnishings of which consisted of one table, one chair, and a superintendent of police. The superintendent was seated in the chair, and was busily writing at the table.

The two guards led the prisoner towards the table, and, upon a sign from the superintendent, drew back so far as to be unable to hear anything.

The superintendent, who had till this time held his head down over his papers, looked up to see what sort of person he had to deal with. This superintendent was a man of repulsive mien, with a pointed nose, yellow and salient cheek-bones, small, but keen penetrating, eyes, and an expression of countenance resembling at once the polecat and the fox. His head, supported by a long and flexible neck, issued from his large black robe, balancing itself, with a motion very much like that of the tortoise when drawing its head out of its shell.

He began by asking M. Bonacieux his full name, age, condition, and abode.

The accused replied that his name was Jacques Michel Bonacieux, that he was fifty-one years old, was a retired mercer, and lived No. 11, Rue des Fossoyeurs.

The superintendent then, instead of continuing to question him, made him a long speech upon the danger there was for an obscure bourgeois to meddle with public matters.

He complicated this exordium by an exposition in which he painted the power and the acts of the cardinal — that incomparable minister, that conqueror of past ministers, that example for ministers to come — acts and power which no one could thwart with impunity.

After this second part of his discourse, fixing his hawk's eye upon poor Bonacieux, he bade him reflect upon the seriousness of his situation.

The reflections of the mercer were already made; he consigned to the devil the moment when M. La Porte had formed the idea of marrying him to his goddaughter, and particularly the moment when that goddaughter had been received mistress of the linen to her Majesty.

The character of M. Bonacieux was one of profound selfishness, mixed with sordid avarice, the whole seasoned with extreme cowardice. The love with which his young wife had inspired him was a secondary sentiment, and was not strong enough to contend with the primitive feelings we have just enumerated.

Bonacieux did reflect, in fact, upon what had just been said to him.

"But, superintendent," said he, timidly, "I beg you to believe that I know and appreciate more than anybody the merit of the incomparable eminence by whom we have the honor to be governed."

"Really?" asked the superintendent, with an air of doubt, "really? If that is truly so, how came you in the Bastille?"

"How I came here, or rather why I came here," replied Bonacieux, "is entirely impossible for me to tell you, because I myself don't know; but to a certainty it is not for having — knowingly, at least — disobliged the cardinal."

"You must, nevertheless, have committed a crime, since you are here, and are accused of high treason."

"Of high treason!" cried the terrified Bonacieux, "high treason! How is it possible for a poor mercer, who detests all Huguenots, and who abhors all Spaniards, to be accused of high treason? Consider, sir, the thing is materially impossible."

"Monsieur Bonacieux," said the superintendent, looking at the accused as if his little eyes had the faculty of reading to the very depths of the heart, "Monsieur Bonacieux, you have a wife?"

"Yes, sir," replied the mercer, all of a tremble, feeling that this was the point at which affairs were likely to get mixed up, "that is to say, I had one."

"What? you had one! What have you done with her, then, if you have her no longer?"

"She has been carried off from me, sir."

"Been carried off from you?" said the superintendent. "Ah!"

Bonacieux felt, when he heard this "Ah," that matters were becoming more and more entangled.

"She has been carried off," resumed the superintendent; "and do you know who the man is that has committed this outrage?"

"I think I know him."

"Who is he?"

"Remember that I affirm nothing, superintendent, and that I only suspect."

"Whom do you suspect? Come, answer freely."

M. Bonacieux was in the greatest possible perplexity: had he better deny everything or tell everything? By denying all, it might be suspected that he knew too much to confess: by confessing all, he would prove his good-will. He decided then upon telling all.

"I suspect," said he, "a tall, dark man, of lofty carriage, who has the air of a great lord. He followed us several times, as I think, when I waited for my wife at the wicket of the Louvre to fetch her home."

The superintendent appeared to experience a little uneasiness.

"And his name?" said he.

"Oh! as to his name, I know nothing about that, but, if I were ever to meet him, I should know him in an instant, I will answer for it, even if he were among a thousand persons."

The face of the superintendent grew still darker.

"You would recognize him among a thousand, say you?" continued he.

"That is to say," cried Bonacieux, who saw he had gone wrong, "that is to say—"

"You answered that you would recognize him," said the superintendent; "that is very well, and enough for to-day.

Before we proceed further, some one must be informed that you know the abductor of your wife."

"But I did not tell you that I know him!" cried Bonacieux in despair, "I told you, on the contrary —"

"Take away the prisoner," said the superintendent to the two guards.

"Where shall we place him?" demanded the officer.

"In a dungeon."

"Which one?"

"Good Lord! in the first you come to, provided it be a safe one," said the superintendent, with an indifference which filled poor Bonacieux with horror.

"Alas! alas!" said he to himself, "misfortune hangs over me; my wife must have committed some frightful crime; they believe that I am her accomplice, and will punish me with her! She must have spoken, she must have confessed everything, a woman is so weak! A dungeon, the first he comes to! that's it! one night is soon over; and to-morrow to the wheel, to the gallows! Oh! my God! my God! have pity on me!"

Without listening the least in the world to the lamentations of Master Bonacieux, lamentations to which, indeed, they must have been pretty well accustomed, the two guards took the prisoner each by an arm, and led him away, while the superintendent wrote a letter in haste, while his recorder was waiting.

Bonacieux could not close his eyes; not because his dungeon was so very disagreeable, but because his uneasiness was too great to allow him to sleep. He sat up all night upon his stool, starting at the least noise; and when the first rays of the sun penetrated into his cell, the dawn itself appeared to him to have taken on a funereal tint.

All at once he heard his bolts drawn, and sprang up with a terrible bound, believing that they had come to lead him to the scaffold. Therefore when he saw purely and simply his superintendent and recorder of the preceding evening appear, instead of the executioner he was expecting, he was ready to embrace them both.

"Your affair has become more complicated since yesterday evening, my good man, and I advise you to tell the whole truth. For your repentance alone can remove the cardinal's anger."

"Why, I am ready to tell everything," cried Bonacieux, "at least, all that I know. Question me, I entreat you!"

"Where is your wife, in the first place?"

"Why, did not I tell you she had been stolen away from me?"

"Yes, but yesterday, at five o'clock in the afternoon, thanks to you, she escaped."

"My wife escaped!" cried Bonacieux. "Oh! unfortunate creature! Sir, if she has escaped, it is no fault of mine, I will swear."

"What business had you then to go into the chamber of M. d'Artagnan, your lodger, with whom you had a long conference in the course of the day?"

"Ah! yes, superintendent; yes, that is true, and I confess that I was in the wrong. I did go to M. d'Artagnan's apartment."

"What was the object of your visit?"

"To beg him to assist me in finding my wife. I believed I had a right to endeavor to recover her. I was mistaken, as it appears, and I ask your pardon for so doing."

"And what did M. d'Artagnan reply?"

"M. d'Artagnan promised me his assistance; but I soon found out that he was betraying me."

"You are trifling with justice! M. d'Artagnan made an agreement with you, and in virtue of that agreement put to flight the police officers who had arrested your wife, and placed her out of reach of all inquiries."

"M. d'Artagnan has carried off my wife! What can that mean?"

"Fortunately M. d'Artagnan is in our hands, and you shall be confronted with him."

"Ah! 'pon my word! I ask nothing better," cried Bonacieux; "I shall not be sorry to see the face of an acquaintance."

"Bring in M. d'Artagnan," said the superintendent to the guards.

The two guards led in Athos.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the superintendent, addressing Athos, "declare what passed between you and the gentleman here."

"But," cried Bonacieux, "that is not M. d'Artagnan whom you show me!"

"What! not M. d'Artagnan!" exclaimed the superintendent.

"Not the least in the world like him," replied Bonacieux.

"What is this gentleman's name?" asked the superintendent.

"I cannot tell you; I don't know him."

"How! you don't know him?"

"No."

"Did you never see him?"

"Yes, I have seen him, but I don't know what his name is."

"Your name?" asked the superintendent.

"Athos," replied the musketeer.

"But that is not a man's name, that is the name of a mountain," cried the poor superintendent, who began to feel a little bewildered.

"That is my name," said Athos, quietly.

"But you said that your name was D'Artagnan."

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you."

"That is to say, some one asked me: 'You are Monsieur d'Artagnan?' I answered, 'You think so, do you?' My guards exclaimed that they were sure I was. I did not think it worth while to contradict them. Besides, I might myself be deceived."

"Sir, you insult the majesty of justice."

"Not at all," said Athos, calmly.

"You are Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"You see, sir, that you persist in saying that I am."

"But, I tell you, superintendent," cried Bonacieux, in his turn, "there is not the least doubt about the matter. M. d'Artagnan is my tenant, and consequently, although he does not pay me my rent, and even the more on that account, I ought to know him. M. d'Artagnan is a young man, scarcely nineteen or twenty, and this gentleman must be thirty at least. M. d'Artagnan is in M. des Essarts's guards, and this gentleman is in the company of M. de Tréville's musketeers; look at his uniform, superintendent, look at his uniform!"

"That's true," murmured the superintendent; "zounds! that's true."

At this moment the door was opened quickly, and a messenger, introduced by one of the gate-keepers of the Bastille, gave a letter to the superintendent.

"Oh! unhappy woman!" cried the superintendent.

"How! what do you say? of whom do you speak? It is not of my wife, I hope!"

"On the contrary, it is of her. Your affair is becoming a pretty one."

"But," cried the exasperated mercer, "do me the pleasure, sir, to tell me how my own affair can become the worse by anything my wife does while I am in prison?"

"Because what she does is part of a plan concerted between you — of an infernal plan!"

"I swear to you, superintendent, that you are profoundly mistaken, that I know nothing in the world about what my wife had to do; that I am an entire stranger to what she has done, and that if she has committed any follies, I renounce her, I abjure her, I curse her!"

"Bah!" said Athos to the superintendent, "if you have no further need of me, send me somewhere. Your Monsieur Bonacieux is very tiresome."

"Lead back the prisoners to their cells," said the superintendent, designating, by the same gesture, Athos and Bonacieux, "and let them be guarded more closely than ever."

"And yet," said Athos, with his habitual calmness, "if it be M. d'Artagnan who is concerned in this matter, I do not see very well how I can take his place."

"Do as I bade you," cried the superintendent, "and preserve the profoundest secrecy! You understand me!"

Athos shrugged his shoulders, and followed his guards while Monsieur Bonacieux uttered lamentations enough to break a tiger's heart.

They led back the mercer to the same dungeon in which he had passed the night, and left him to himself the whole day. Bonacieux wept the whole day like a true mercer, not being at all a military man, as he himself informed us.

In the evening, at the moment when he had made his mind up to lie down upon the bed, he heard steps in his corridor. These steps drew near to his cell, the door was thrown open, and the guards appeared.

"Follow me," said an officer, who came behind the guards.

"Follow you!" cried Bonacieux, "follow you at this hour! Where, in God's name?"

"Where we have orders to lead you."

"But that is not an answer."

"It is, nevertheless, the only one we can give you."

"Ah! my God! my God!" murmured the poor mercer, "now, indeed, I am lost!"

And, mechanically and without resistance, he followed the guards who came for him.

He passed along the same corridor as before, crossed a first court, then a second part of the building. At length at the gate of the outer court he found a carriage surrounded by four guards on horseback. They made him get into this carriage,

the officer placed himself by his side, the door was locked, and both were left in a rolling prison.

The carriage was put in motion as slowly as a funeral car. Through the padlocked gratings the prisoner could see the houses and the pavement, that was all. But, true Parisian as he was, Bonacieux could recognize every street by the mounting stones, the signs, and the lamps. At the moment of reaching Saint Paul, the spot where such as were condemned at the Bastille were executed, he came near fainting and crossed himself twice. He thought the carriage was about to stop there. The carriagė, however, passed on.

Farther on, a still greater terror seized him, on passing by the cemetery of Saint Jean, where state criminals were buried. One thing, however, reassured him: he remembered that before they were buried their heads were generally cut off, and he felt that his head was still on his shoulders. But when he saw the carriage take the way to La Grève, when he perceived the pointed roofs of the city hall, when the carriage passed under the arcade, he then thought all was over with him, wished to confess to the officer, and upon his refusal, uttered such pitiable cries that the officer told him if he continued to deafen him in that manner, he should put a gag in his mouth.

This menace somewhat reassured Bonacieux; if they meant to execute him at La Grève, it could scarcely be worth while to gag him, as they had nearly reached the place of execution. In fact, the carriage crossed the fatal square without stopping.

There remained, then, no other place to fear but the Croix-du-Trahoir. The carriage was taking the direct road to it.

This time there was no longer any doubt: it was at the Croix-du-Trahoir that obscure criminals were executed. Bonacieux had flattered himself by believing himself worthy of Saint Paul or of the Place de Grève. It was at the Croix-du-Trahoir that his journey and his destiny were to end. He could not yet see that dreadful cross, but he felt as if it were in some sort coming to meet him. When he was within twenty paces of it, he heard a great stir, and the carriage stopped. This was more than poor Bonacieux could endure, depressed as he was by the successive emotions which he had experienced. He uttered a feeble groan, which might have been taken for the last sigh of a dying man, and fainted.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN OF MEUNG.

The crowd was occasioned not by the expectation of a man who was to be hanged, but by the contemplation of a man who was hanged.

The carriage, which had been stopped for a minute, resumed its way, passed through the crowd, threaded the Rue Saint Honoré, turned the Rue des Bons Enfants, and stopped before a low door.

The door opened, two guards received Bonacieux in their arms from the officer, who supported him. They carried him along an alley, up a flight of stairs, and deposited him in an ante-chamber.

All these movements had been effected mechanically, as far as he was concerned. He had moved along as if in a dream; he had had a glimpse of objects as though through a fog; his ears had perceived sounds without comprehending them; he might have been executed at that moment without his making a single gesture in his own defence, or his uttering a cry to implore mercy.

He therefore remained upon the bench, with his back leaning against the wall and his hands hanging down, exactly in the spot where the guards had placed him.

On looking round him, however, as he could see no threatening object, as nothing indicated that he ran any real danger, as the bench was comfortably covered with a well-stuffed cushion, as the wall was ornamented with beautiful Cordova leather, and as large red-damask curtains, held back by gold fastenings, floated before the window, he perceived by degrees that his fear was exaggerated, and he began to turn his head to the right and the left, upwards and downwards.

At this movement, which nobody opposed, he gained a little courage, and ventured to draw up one leg and then the other. At length, with the help of both hands, he raised himself up upon the bench, and found himself upon his feet.

At that moment an officer of pleasant appearance opened a door, continued to exchange some words with a person in the next room, and then came up to the prisoner.

"Is your name Bonacieux?" said he.

"Yes, officer," stammered the mercer, more dead than alive, "at your service."

"Come in," said the officer.

And he moved aside to let the mercer pass. The latter obeyed without reply, and entered the room, where it appeared he was expected.

It was a large, close, and stifling cabinet, the walls furnished with arms offensive and defensive, and where there was already a fire, although it was scarcely the end of September. A square table, covered with books and papers, upon which was unrolled an immense plan of the city of Rochelle, occupied the centre of the apartment.

Standing before the fireplace was a man of middle height, of a haughty, proud mien, with piercing eyes, a broad brow, and a thin face which was made still longer by a royal (or imperial, as it is now called), surmounted by a pair of moustaches. Although this man was scarcely thirty-six or thirty-seven years of age, hair, moustaches, and royal, all were growing gray. This man, though without a sword, had all the appearance of a soldier; and his buff leather boots, still slightly covered with dust, showed that he had been on horseback in the course of the day.

This man was Armand Jean Duplessis, Cardinal Richelieu, not such as he is generally represented, — broken down like an old man, suffering like a martyr, his body bent, his voice almost inaudible, buried in a large arm-chair as in an anticipated tomb, no longer living save by the strength of his genius, and no longer maintaining the struggle with Europe but by the eternal application of his thoughts, — but such as he really was at this period; that is to say, an active and gallant cavalier, already weak of body, but sustained by that moral force which made him one of the most extraordinary men that ever existed, preparing, after having supported the Duke of Nevers in his duchy of Mantua, after having taken Nimes, Castres, and Uzes, to drive the English from the island of Ré, and lay siege to Rochelle.

At first sight, nothing indicated the cardinal; and it was impossible for those who did not know his face to guess in whose presence they were.

The poor mercer remained standing at the door, while the eyes of the personage we have just described were fixed upon him, and appeared to wish to penetrate even into the depths of his past.

"Is this Bonacieux?" asked he, after a moment of silence.

"Yes, monseigneur," replied the officer.

"Very well. Give me those papers, and leave us."

The officer took the papers pointed out from the table, gave them to him who asked for them, bowed to the ground, and retired.

Bonacieux recognized in these papers his examination at the Bastille. From time to time the man at the fireplace raised his eyes from the writings, and plunged them like daggers into the heart of the poor mercer.

At the end of ten minutes' reading, and ten seconds of examination, the cardinal had made up his mind.

"That head has never conspired," murmured he; "but no matter, let us investigate just the same."

"You are accused of high treason," said the cardinal, slowly.

"So I have been told already, monseigneur," cried Bonacieux, giving his questioner the title he had heard the officer give him, "but I swear to you that I knew nothing about it."

The cardinal repressed a smile.

"You have conspired with your wife, with Madame de Chevreuse, and with milord the Duke of Buckingham."

"In fact, monseigneur, I have heard her pronounce all those names."

"And on what occasion?"

"She said that Cardinal Richelieu had drawn the Duke of Buckingham to Paris to ruin him and to ruin the queen."

"She said that?" cried the cardinal, angrily.

"Yes, monseigneur, but I told her she was wrong to talk about such things, and that his Eminence was incapable —"

"Hold your tongue! You are a fool," replied the cardinal.

"That's exactly what my wife said, monseigneur."

"Do you know who carried off your wife?"

"No, monseigneur."

"You have suspicions, nevertheless?"

"Yes, monseigneur; but these suspicions appeared to be disagreeable to the superintendent, and I no longer have them."

"Your wife has escaped! Did you know that?"

"No, monseigneur; I learned it since I have been in prison, and then from the conversation of the superintendent — a very pleasant man."

The cardinal repressed another smile.

"Then you are ignorant of what has become of your wife since her flight?"

"Absolutely, monseigneur; but she has most likely returned to the Louvre."

"At one o'clock this morning she had not returned."

"My God! what can have become of her, then?"

"We shall know, be assured. Nothing is concealed from the cardinal; the cardinal knows everything."

"In that case, monseigneur, do you believe the cardinal will be so kind as to tell me what has become of my wife?"

"Perhaps he may; but you must, in the first place, reveal to the cardinal all you know of your wife's relations with Madame de Chevreuse."

"But, monseigneur, I know nothing about them. I have never seen her!"

"When you went to fetch your wife from the Louvre, did you always return directly home?"

"Scarcely ever; she had business to transact with linen-drapers, to whose shops I escorted her."

"And how many were there of these linen-drapers?"

"Two, monseigneur."

"And where did they live?"

"One Rue de Vaugirard, the other Rue de la Harpe."

"Do you go into these houses with her?"

"Never, monseigneur; I waited at the door."

"And what excuse did she make for thus going in alone?"

"She gave me none; she told me to wait, and I waited."

"You are a very complacent husband, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux," said the cardinal.

"He calls me his dear monsieur," said the mercer to himself. "Bah! matters are going all right!"

"Should you know those doors again?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the numbers?"

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"No. 25 in the Rue Vaugirard; 75 in the Rue de la Harpe."

"Very well," said the cardinal.

At these words, he took up a silver bell and rang it: the officer entered.

"Go," said he in a subdued voice, "and find Rochefort; tell him to come to me immediately, if he has returned."

"The count is here," said the officer, "and wishes to speak instantly with your Eminence."

"Let him come in, then; let him come in, then!" said the cardinal, eagerly.

The officer rushed out of the apartment with that alacrity which all the cardinal's servants displayed in obeying him.

"To your Eminence!" murmured Bonacieux, rolling his eyes round in astonishment.

Five seconds had not elapsed after the disappearance of the officer, when the door opened and a new personage entered.

"It is he!" cried Bonacieux.

"He! what he?" asked the cardinal.

"The man who took away my wife!"

The cardinal rang a second time. The officer reappeared.

"Place this man in the care of his two guards, and let him wait till I send for him."

"No, monseigneur! no! it is not he!" cried Bonacieux; "no, I was mistaken. This is quite a different man, and does not resemble him at all. The gentleman is a very good sort of man!"

"Take away this fool!" said the cardinal.

The officer took Bonacieux by the arm, and led him into the ante-chamber, where he found his two guards.

The newly introduced personage followed Bonacieux impatiently with his eyes till he was gone out, and the moment the door closed he advanced eagerly toward the cardinal, and said:

"They have seen each other!"

"Who?" asked his Eminence.

"He and she!"

"The queen and the duke?" cried Richelieu.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At the Louvre."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Who told you of it?"

"Madame Lannoy, who is devoted to your Eminence, as you know."

"Why did she not let me know sooner?"

"Whether by chance or mistrust, the queen made Madame de Surgis sleep in her chamber, and kept her all day."

"Well, we are beaten! Now let us try to take our revenge."

"I will assist you with all my heart, monseigneur; be assured of that."

"How did it take place?"

"At half-past twelve, the queen was with her women —"

"Where?"

"In her bed-chamber —"

"Go on."

"When some one came and brought her a handkerchief from her *dame de lingerie*."

"And then!"

"The queen immediately exhibited strong emotion, and, in spite of the rouge which covered her face, grew pale."

"Go on, go on!"

"She, however, rose, and with a trembling voice: 'Ladies,' said she, 'wait for me ten minutes, I shall soon return.' She then opened the door of her alcove, and went out."

"Why did not Madame Lannoy come and inform you instantly?"

"Nothing was certain as yet; besides, her Majesty had said, 'Ladies, wait for me;' and she dared not disobey the queen."

"How long did the queen remain outside of the chamber?"

"Three-quarters of an hour."

"Did none of her women accompany her?"

"Only Doña Estefana."

"And she afterwards returned?"

"Yes; but only to take a little rosewood casket, with her monogram upon it, and to go out again immediately."

"And when she finally returned, did she bring that casket with her?"

"No."

"Does Madame de Lannoy know what was in that casket?"

"Yes; the diamond studs which his Majesty gave the queen."

"And she came back without this casket?"

"Yes."

"Madame de Lannoy, then, is of the opinion that she gave them to Buckingham?"

"She is sure of it."

"How can she be sure?"

"In the course of the day, Madame de Lannoy, in her quality of tire-woman of the queen, looked for this casket, appeared uneasy at not finding it, and at length asked the queen if she knew anything about it."

"And the queen?"

"The queen became exceedingly red, and replied that having on the preceding evening broken one of those studs, she had sent it to her goldsmith to be repaired."

"He must be called upon, and so ascertain if the thing be true or not."

"I have just been at his shop."

"And the goldsmith says?—"

"The goldsmith has heard of nothing of the kind."

"Good! good! Rochefort, all is not lost! and perhaps — perhaps everything is for the best!"

"The fact is, that I do not doubt your Eminence's genius —"

"Will repair the blunders of his agent — is that it?"

"That is exactly what I was going to say, if your Eminence had permitted me to finish my sentence."

"Do you know where the Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duke of Buckingham were concealed?"

"No, monseigneur. My people could tell me nothing positive in regard to that."

"But I know."

"You, monseigneur?"

"Yes; or at least I suspect. They were, one in the Rue Vaugirard, No. 25, the other in the Rue de la Harpe, No. 75."

"Does your Eminence wish them both to be arrested?"

"It is too late; they will be gone."

"But still we can make sure of it."

"Take ten men of my guards, and search both houses thoroughly."

"Instantly, monseigneur."

The cardinal, upon being left alone, reflected for an instant, and then rang the bell a third time.

The same officer appeared.

"Bring the prisoner in again," said the cardinal.

Master Bonacieux was introduced anew, and upon a sign from the cardinal the officer retired.

"You have deceived me!" said the cardinal, sternly.

"I!" cried Bonacieux; "I! deceive your Eminence!"

"Your wife, when going to Rue de Vaugirard and Rue de la Harpe, did not go to any linen-drapers'."

"Then where, in God's name, did she go?"

"She went to the house of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and she went to the Duke of Buckingham's."

"Yes," cried Bonacieux, recalling all the circumstances, "yes, that's it. Your Eminence is right. I told my wife, several times, that it was surprising that linen-drapers should live in such houses, — in houses that had no signs,— and every time she began to laugh. Ah! monseigneur!" continued Bonacieux, throwing himself at his Eminence's feet, "ah! how truly you are the cardinal, the great cardinal, the man of genius whom all the world reveres!"

However contemptible might be the triumph gained over so vulgar a being as Bonacieux, the cardinal did not the less enjoy it for an instant. Then, almost immediately, as if a new

thought had entered his mind, a smile passed over his lips, and, reaching out his hand to the mercer, —

"Rise, my friend," said he; "you are an honest man."

"The cardinal has touched me with his hand! I have touched the hand of the great man!" cried Bonacieux; "the great man has called me his friend!"

"Yes, my friend; yes!" said the cardinal, with that paternal tone which he sometimes knew how to assume, but which deceived only those who did not know him; "and as you have been unjustly suspected — well! you must be indemnified. Here! take this purse of a hundred pistoles, and pardon me."

"I pardon you, monseigneur!" said Bonacieux, hesitating to take the purse, fearing, doubtless, that this pretended gift was only a joke. "But you are free to have me arrested, you are free to have me tortured, you are free to have me hung. You are the master, and I should not have the least word to say about it. Pardon you, monseigneur! you cannot mean that."

"Ah! my dear Monsieur Bonacieux, you are generous in this matter, and I thank you for it. So you will take this purse, and you will go away without being too much dissatisfied with your treatment?"

"I shall go away enchanted."

"Farewell, then; that is to say, for the present, for I hope we shall meet again."

"Whenever monseigneur wishes. I am always at his Eminence's orders."

"And that will be frequently, I assure you, for I have found something extremely agreeable in your conversation."

"Oh! monseigneur!"

"*Au revoir,* Monsieur Bonacieux, *au revoir!*"

And the cardinal made him a sign with his hand, to which Bonacieux replied by bowing to the ground. He then backed himself out, and when he was in the ante-chamber, the cardinal heard him, in his enthusiasm, crying aloud, "Long life to monseigneur! Long life to his Eminence! Long life to the great cardinal!" The cardinal listened with a smile to this vociferous manifestation of master Bonacieux's enthusiasm; and then, when Bonacieux's cries were no longer audible, —

"Good!" said he; "here's a man who, henceforward, would lay down his life for me."

And the cardinal began to examine with the greatest attention the map of Rochelle, which, as we have said, lay open upon the table, tracing with a pencil the line where the famous

dyke was to pass, which, eighteen months later, shut up the port of the besieged city.

As he was in the deepest part of his strategic meditations, the door opened again, and Rochefort entered.

"Well!" said the cardinal eagerly, rising with a quickness which proved the degree of importance he attached to the commission with which he had charged the count.

"Well!" said the latter, "a young woman of about twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age, and a man of from thirty-five to forty, have been lodging in fact at the two houses pointed out by your Eminence, the one four days and the other five, but the woman left last night, and the man this morning."

"They were the persons!" cried the cardinal, looking at the clock; "and now it is too late to have them pursued. The duchess is at Tours, and the duke at Boulogne. We can find them again only in London."

"What are your Eminence's orders?"

"Not a word of what has passed. Let the queen remain in perfect security; let her be ignorant that we know her secret. Let her believe that we are in search of some conspiracy or other. Send me Séguier, the keeper of the seals."

"And that man — what has your Eminence done with him?"

"What man?" asked the cardinal.

"That Bonacieux."

"I have done with him all that could be done. I have made him a spy upon his wife."

The comte de Rochefort bowed like a man who acknowledges the great superiority of his master, and retired.

Left alone, the cardinal sat down again, wrote a letter which he sealed with his private seal, then rang the bell. The officer entered for the fourth time.

"Have Vitray sent to me," said he, "and tell him to be ready for a journey."

An instant after the man he required was before him, booted and spurred.

"Vitray," said he, "you will go with all speed to London. You must not stop an instant on the way. You will deliver this letter to milady. Here is an order for two hundred pistoles; call upon my treasurer and get the money. You shall have as much again if you are back within six days, and have executed your commission well."

The messenger, without replying a single word, bowed, took the letter, with the order for the two hundred pistoles, and went out.

These were the contents of the letter:

"MILADY:

"Be at the first ball at which the Duke of Buckingham shall be present. He will wear on his doublet twelve diamond studs. Get as near to him as you can, and cut off two of them.

"As soon as these studs are in your possession, inform me."

CHAPTER XV.

MAGISTRATES AND SOLDIERS.

ON the day after these events had taken place, Athos not having reappeared, M. de Tréville was informed by D'Artagnan and Porthos of his absence. As to Aramis, he had asked for a five days' furlough, and had gone, it was said, to Rouen, on family business.

M. de Tréville was the father of his soldiers. The lowest or the most obscure among them, as soon as he assumed the uniform of the company, was as sure of his aid and support as his brother himself could have been.

He repaired then instantly to the residence of the Chief of Police. The officer who commanded the post of the Croix-Rouge was sent for, and by successive inquiries they found that Athos was then lodged in the For l'Evêque.

Athos had passed through all the examinations we have seen Bonacieux undergo.

We were present at the scene in which the two captives were confronted with each other. Athos, who had till that time said nothing, for fear that D'Artagnan, interrupted in his turn, should not have the time he needed, — Athos from this moment declared that his name was Athos and not D'Artagnan. He added that he did not know either Monsieur or Madame Bonacieux; that he had never spoken to either; that he had come, at about ten o'clock in the evening, to pay a visit to his friend, M. D'Artagnan, but up to that hour he had been at M. de Tréville's, where he had dined. "Twenty witnesses," added he, "could attest the fact," and he named several distinguished gentlemen, and among them was the Duc de la Trémouille.

The second superintendent was as much bewildered as the first had been by the simple but firm declaration of the

musketeer upon whom he was anxious to take revenge, which men of the robe like at all times to gain over men of the sword. But the name of M. de Tréville, and that of M. de la Trémouille, demanded consideration.

Athos was also sent to the cardinal, but unfortunately the cardinal was at the Louvre with the king.

It was precisely at this moment that M. de Tréville, coming from the residence of the chief of police and the office of the governor of the For l'Evêque, without having been able to find Athos, arrived at the palace.

As captain of the musketeers, M. de Tréville had at all times the right of entrance to the king.

It is well known how violent the king's prejudices were against the queen, and how skilfully these prejudices were kept up by the cardinal, who, in affairs of intrigue, mistrusted women much more than men. One of the principal causes of this prejudice was the friendship of Anne of Austria for Madame de Chevreuse. These two women gave him more uneasiness than the war with Spain, the quarrel with England, or the embarrassment of the finances. In his eyes and to his perfect conviction, Madame de Chevreuse not only served the queen in her political intrigues, but — and this troubled him still more — in her love affairs.

At the first word the cardinal uttered concerning Madame de Chevreuse, who, though exiled to Tours, and believed to be in that city, had come to Paris, remained there five days, and had outwitted the police, the king flew into a furious passion. Although capricious and unfaithful, the king wished to be called Louis the Just and Louis the Chaste. Posterity will have a difficulty in understanding this character, which history explains only by facts and never by reasonings.

But when the cardinal added that not only Madame de Chevreuse had been in Paris, but, also that the queen had communicated with her by the means of one of those mysterious correspondences which at that time was called a cabal, when he affirmed that he, the cardinal, was about to unravel the most tightly twisted threads of this intrigue, when at the moment of arresting in the very act, with all the proofs on her, the queen's emissary to the exiled duchess, a musketeer had dared to interrupt violently the court of justice, by falling, sword in hand, upon the honest men of the law charged with investigating impartially the whole affair, in order to place it before the eyes of the king, Louis XIII. could contain himself no longer; he took a step toward the queen's apartment,

showing that pale and mute indignation which, when it broke out, led this prince to the commission of the coldest cruelty.

And yet, in all this, the cardinal had not yet said a word about the Duke of Buckingham.

At this instant M. de Tréville entered, cold, polite, and in irreproachable costume.

Made aware of what had just gone on by the presence of the cardinal and the alteration in the king's countenance, M. de Tréville felt himself very much like Samson before the Philistines.

Louis XIII. had already placed his hand on the knob of the door. At the noise made by the entrance of M. de Tréville he turned round.

"You arrive in good time, sir," said the king, who, when his passions were raised to a certain point, could not dissemble; "I have learned some pretty things concerning your musketeers!"

"And I," said M. de Tréville, coldly, "I have some pretty things to inform your Majesty concerning your magistrates."

"What?" said the king, haughtily.

"I have the honor to inform your Majesty," continued M. de Tréville, in the same tone, "that a party of procurators, superintendents, and police officials, very estimable people, but as it appears very hostile to the uniform, have taken upon themselves to arrest in a house, to lead away through the open street, and throw into the For l'Evêque, — all upon an order which they have refused to show me, — one of my, or rather your, musketeers, sire, a man of irreproachable conduct, of an almost illustrious reputation, and whom your Majesty knows favorably, M. Athos."

"Athos!" said the king, mechanically; "yes, indeed, I know that name."

"Let your Majesty remember," said M. de Tréville, "that M. Athos is the musketeer who, in the unfortunate duel which you are acquainted with, had the misfortune seriously to wound M. de Cahusac. By the way, monseigneur," continued de Tréville, addressing the cardinal, "M. de Cahusac has entirely recovered, has he not?"

"Thank you!" said the cardinal, biting his lips with anger.

"M. Athos, then, had gone to pay a visit to one of his friends, absent at the time," continued M. de Tréville, "to a young Béarnais, a cadet in his Majesty's guards, the company of M. des Essarts, but scarcely had he arrived at his friend's and taken up a book, while waiting for his return, when a mixed

crowd of bailiffs and soldiers came and laid siege to the house, broke open several doors —"

The cardinal made the king a sign, which signified, "That was on account of the affair about which I spoke to you."

"Oh! we all know that," interrupted the king; "for all that was done for our service."

"Then," said Tréville, "it was also for your Majesty's service that one of my musketeers, who was innocent, was seized; that he was placed between two guards, like a malefactor, and that this gallant man, who has ten times shed his blood in your Majesty's service, and is ready to shed it again, has been paraded through the midst of an insolent populace!"

"Bah!" said the king, who began to give way; "was it managed in that way?"

"M. de Tréville," said the cardinal, with the greatest coolness, "does not tell your Majesty that this innocent musketeer, this gallant man, had only an hour before attacked, sword in hand, four duly appointed examiners who were delegated by me to look into an affair of the highest importance."

"I defy your Eminence to prove it," cried M. de Tréville, with his Gascon freedom and military roughness; "for, one hour before, M. Athos, who, I will confide it to your Majesty, is really a man of the highest quality, did me the honor, after having dined with me, to remain in the parlor of my hôtel, and converse there with the Duc de la Trémouille and the Comte de Châlus, who were present."

The king looked at the cardinal.

"A written examination attests it," said the cardinal, replying aloud to his Majesty's mute question, "and the ill-treated people have drawn up the following, which I have the honor to present to your Majesty."

"And are the reports of magistrates to be compared with the word of soldiers?" replied Tréville, haughtily.

"Come, come, Tréville, hold your tongue," said the king.

"If his Eminence entertains any suspicion against one of my musketeers," said Tréville, "the cardinal's justice is sufficiently well known to induce me to demand an inquiry myself."

"In the house in which the judicial inquiry was made," continued the phlegmatic cardinal, "there lodges, I believe, a young Béarnais, a friend of the musketeer's."

"Your Eminence means M. d'Artagnan."

"I mean a young man who is under your protection, Monsieur de Tréville."

"Yes, your Eminence, it is the same."

"Do not suspect this young man of having given bad advice—"

"To M. Athos! to a man double his age?" interrupted M. de Tréville. "No, monseigneur. Besides, M. d'Artagnan passed the evening at my hôtel."

"Well," said the cardinal, "everybody seems to have passed the evening at your hôtel!"

"Does your Eminence doubt my word?" said Tréville, his brow flushing with anger.

"No, God forbid!" said the cardinal; "but only let me inquire at what hour he was with you?"

"Oh, that I can affirm positively, your Eminence; for as he came in I remarked that it was but half-past nine by the clock, although I had believed it to be later."

"And at what hour did he leave your hôtel?"

"At half-past ten; an hour after the event."

"Well, but," replied the cardinal, who did not for an instant suspect De Tréville's loyalty, and who felt that the victory was escaping from his hands, — "well, but Athos *was* taken in at that house in the Rue des Fossoyeurs."

"Is one friend forbidden to visit another? or a musketeer of my company to fraternize with a guard of M. des Essarts's company?"

"Yes, when the house in which he fraternizes is under suspicion."

"That house is under suspicion, Tréville," said the king; "perhaps you were not aware of that?"

"Indeed, sire, I knew nothing of it. The house may be under suspicion, but I deny that it is so in that portion of it inhabited by M. d'Artagnan; for I can affirm, sire, if I can believe what he says, that there does not exist a more devoted servant of your Majesty, or a more profound admirer of the cardinal."

"Was it not this D'Artagnan who wounded Jussac, in that unfortunate encounter which took place near the monastery of the Carmes Déchaussés?" asked the king, looking at the cardinal, who colored with vexation.

"And the next day Bernajoux. Yes, sire, yes, it is the same. Your Majesty has an excellent memory."

"Come, what shall we decide?" said the king.

"That concerns your Majesty more than me," said the cardinal. "I should say that he was guilty."

"And I deny it," said De Tréville. "But his Majesty has judges, and these judges will decide."

"That is best," said the king. "Send the case before the judges; it is their business to judge, and they will judge."

"Only," replied Tréville, "it is a sad thing that in the unfortunate times in which we live, the purest life, the most incontestable virtue, cannot exempt a man from infamy and persecution. The army, I will answer for it, will be but little pleased at being exposed to rigorous treatment on account of police affairs."

The expression was imprudent; but M. de Tréville launched it with a full knowledge of his case. He was desirous of an explosion, because then the mine throws forth fire, and fire enlightens.

"Police affairs!" cried the king, taking up De Tréville's words; "police affairs! And what do you know about them, sir? Concern yourself with your musketeers, and do not annoy me in this way. It appears, according to your account, that if, unfortunately, a musketeer is arrested, France is in danger! Here's a piece of work about a musketeer! Why, I would arrest ten of them, 's death! a hundred even — all the company! and I will not allow a whisper!"

"From the moment they are suspected by your Majesty," said Tréville, "the musketeers are guilty; therefore, you see me prepared to surrender my sword. For, after having accused my soldiers, there can be no doubt that the cardinal will end by accusing me. It is best to constitute myself at once a prisoner with M. Athos, who is already arrested, and with M. d'Artagnan, who most probably will be arrested."

"You Gascon head! will you have done?" said the king.

"Sire," replied Tréville, without lowering his voice in the least, "either order my musketeer to be restored to me, or let him be tried."

"He shall be tried," said the cardinal.

"Well, so much the better; for in that case I shall demand of his Majesty permission to plead for him."

The king began to fear an outbreak.

"If his Eminence," said he, "had not personal motives —"

The cardinal saw what the king was about to say, and anticipated him:

"Pardon me," said he; "but the instant your Majesty considers me a prejudiced judge, I withdraw."

"Come," said the king, "will you swear by my father that M. Athos was at your residence during the event, and that he took no part in it?"

"By your glorious father, and by yourself, — who are those

whom I love and venerate the most in the world, — I swear it!"

"Be so kind as to reflect, sire," said the cardinal. "If we release the prisoner thus, we shall never be able to know the truth."

"M. Athos can always be found," replied Tréville, "always ready to answer, when it shall please the magistrates to question him. He will not desert, cardinal, be assured of that. I will answer for him."

"No, he will not desert," said the king; "he can always be found, as M. de Tréville says. Besides," added he, lowering his voice, and looking appealingly at the cardinal, "let us give them some security. There is policy in that."

This policy of Louis XIII.'s made Richelieu smile.

"Order it as you please, sire. You possess the right of pardoning."

"The right of pardoning applies only to the guilty," said Tréville, who was determined to have the last word, "and my musketeer is innocent. It is not mercy, then, that you are about to accord, sire. It is justice."

"And he is in the For l'Evêque?" said the king.

"Yes, sire, in solitary confinement, in a dungeon, like the lowest criminal."

"The devil! the devil!" murmured the king; "what must be done?"

"Sign the order for his release, and all will be done," replied the cardinal. "I believe, with your majesty, that M. de Tréville's guarantee is more than sufficient."

Tréville bowed very respectfully, with a joy that was not unmixed with fear. He would have preferred an obstinate resistance, on the part of the cardinal, to this sudden yielding.

The king signed the order for release, and Tréville carried it away without delay.

At the moment he was going out, the cardinal gave him a friendly smile, and said to the king:

"A perfect harmony seems to prevail in your musketeers, sire, between the leader and the soldiers, which must be good for the service, and very honorable to all."

"Now he will immediately play me some dog's trick or other," said Tréville. "There is no possibility of getting the last word with such a man. But let us be quick — the king may change his mind presently. And, at all events, it is more difficult to put a man back into the For l'Evêque or the

Bastille, when once he has got out, than it is to keep him a prisoner when he is there."

M. de Tréville made his entrance triumphantly into the For l'Evêque, from which he delivered the musketeer, whose calm indifference had not for a moment abandoned him.

The first time he saw D'Artagnan, "You have come off well," said he to him; "there is your Jussac thrust paid for. There still remains Bernajoux, but you must not be too confident."

Moreover, M. de Tréville had good reason to mistrust the cardinal, and to think that all was not over; for scarcely had the captain of the musketeers closed the door behind him when his Eminence said to the king:

"Now that we are at length by ourselves, we will, if your Majesty pleases, converse seriously. Sire, Buckingham has been in Paris five days, and left it only this morning."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH MONSIEUR SÉGUIER, THE KEEPER OF THE SEALS, LOOKS MORE THAN ONCE FOR THE BELL, IN ORDER TO RING IT, AS HE USED TO DO.

It is impossible to form an idea of the impression these few words made upon Louis XIII. He grew pale and red alternately, and the cardinal saw at once that he had recovered, by a single blow, all the ground he had lost.

"Buckingham in Paris!" cried he; "and what does he come to do there?"

"To conspire, no doubt, with your enemies, the Huguenots and the Spaniards."

"No, zounds! no! To conspire against my honor with Madame de Chevreuse, Madame de Longueville, and the Condés."

"Oh! sire, what an idea! The queen is too prudent, and, besides, loves your Majesty too well."

"Woman is weak, cardinal," said the king; "and as to loving me much, I have my own opinion respecting that love."

"I none the less maintain," said the cardinal, "that the Duke of Buckingham came to Paris for a project purely political."

"And I am sure that he came for quite another purpose, cardinal. But if the queen be guilty, let her tremble!"

"Indeed," said the cardinal, "whatever repugnance I may

have in fixing my mind on such a treason, your Majesty compels me to think of it. Madame de Lannoy, whom, according to your Majesty's command, I have frequently questioned, told me this morning that the night before last her Majesty sat up very late, that this morning she wept much, and that she was writing all day."

"That's it!" cried the king; "to him, no doubt. Cardinal, I must have the queen's papers."

"But how to get them, sire? It seems to me that neither your Majesty nor I can charge ourselves with such a mission."

"How did they act with regard to the Maréchale d'Ancre?" cried the king, in the highest state of irritation; "her closets were thoroughly searched, and then she herself was searched."

"The Maréchale d'Ancre was only the Maréchale d'Ancre, a Florentine adventuress, sire, and that was all; while the august spouse of your Majesty is Anne of Austria, queen of France, that is to say, one of the greatest princesses in the world."

"She is not the less guilty, duke! The more she has forgotten the high position in which she was placed, the more degrading is her fall. Long ago, in fact, I determined to put an end to all these petty intrigues of politics and love. She has also near her a certain La Porte."

"Who, I believe, is the mainspring of all this, I confess," said the cardinal.

"You think then, as I do, that she deceives me?" said the king.

"I believe, and I repeat it to your Majesty, that the queen conspires against her king's power, but I have not said against his honor."

"And I — I tell you against both; I tell you the queen does not love me; I tell you she loves another. I tell you she loves that infamous Buckingham! Why did you not have him arrested while he was in Paris?"

"Arrest the duke! arrest the prime minister of King Charles I.! Can you think of it, sire! What a scandal! And suppose then the suspicions of your Majesty, which I still continue to doubt, should prove to have any foundation — what a terrible disclosure! what a fearful scandal!"

"But since he played the part of a vagabond or a thief, he should have been —"

Louis XIII. stopped, terrified at what he was to say, while Richelieu, stretching out his neck, waited in vain for the word which had died on the lips of the king.

"He should have been —"

"Nothing," said the king, "nothing. But all the time he was in Paris, you, of course, did not lose sight of him?"

"No, sire."

"Where did he lodge?"

"Rue de la Harpe, No. 75."

"Where is that?"

"Towards the Luxembourg."

"And you are certain that the queen and he did not see each other?"

"I believe the queen to have too high a sense of her duty, sire."

"But they corresponded. It is to him that the queen has been writing all the day. Duke, I must have those letters!"

"Sire, notwithstanding —"

"Duke, at whatever price it may be, I will have them."

"I would, however, beg your Majesty to observe — "

"Do you then also join in betraying me, cardinal, by thus always opposing my will? Are you also in league with Spain and England, with Madame de Chevreuse and the queen?"

"Sire," replied the cardinal, sighing, "I thought I was secure from such a suspicion."

"Cardinal, you have heard me. I will have those letters."

"There is but one means."

"What is that?"

"That would be to charge Séguier, the keeper of the seals, with this mission. The matter belongs entirely to the duties of his office."

"Let him be sent for instantly."

"He is most likely at my hôtel. I requested him to call, and when I came to the Louvre, I left orders, if he came, to have him wait."

"Let him be sent for instantly."

"Your Majesty's orders shall be executed; but —"

"But what?"

"But the queen will perhaps refuse to obey."

"What, my orders?"

"Yes, if she is ignorant that these orders come from the king."

"Well, that she may have no doubt on that head, I will go and inform her myself."

"Your Majesty will not forget that I have done everything in my power to prevent a rupture."

"Yes, duke, yes, I know you are very indulgent toward the

queen — too indulgent, perhaps. We shall have occasion, I warn you, at some future period to speak of that."

"Whenever it shall please your Majesty. But I shall be always happy and proud, sire, to sacrifice myself to the good harmony which I desire to see reign between you and the queen of France."

"Very well, cardinal, very well; but, in the meantime, send for the keeper of the seals. I will go to the queen."

And Louis XIII., opening the communicating door, passed into the corridor which led to the apartments of Anne of Austria.

The queen was in the midst of her women, Madame de Guitaut, Madame de Sablé, Madame de Montbazon, and Madame de Guémenée. In a corner was the Spanish companion, Doña Estefana, who had followed her from Madrid. Madame de Guémenée was reading aloud, and everybody was listening to her with attention, with the exception of the queen, who had, on the contrary, desired this reading in order that she might be able, while feigning to listen, to pursue the thread of her own thoughts.

These thoughts, gilded as they were by a last reflection of love, were none the less sad. Anne of Austria, deprived of her husband's confidence, pursued by the hatred of the cardinal, who could not pardon her for having repulsed a more tender feeling, having before her eyes the example of the queen mother, whom that hatred had tormented all her life, — though Marie de Médici, if the memoirs of the time are to be believed, had begun by granting to the cardinal that love which Anne of Austria always refused to him, — Anne of Austria had seen her most devoted servants fall around her, her most intimate confidants, her dearest favorites. Like those unfortunate persons endowed with a fatal gift, she brought misfortune upon everything she touched. Her friendship was a fateful portent of coming persecution. Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Vernet were exiled, and even La Porte did not conceal from his mistress that he expected to be arrested at any moment.

At the very instant when she was plunged in the deepest and darkest of these reflections, the door of the chamber opened, and the king entered.

The reader was instantly silent, all the ladies rose, and there was a profound silence. The king made no demonstration of politeness; only, stopping before the queen, —

"Madame," said he, in an unnatural voice, "you are about to receive a visit from the chancellor, who will communicate certain matters to you with which I have charged him."

The unhappy queen, who was constantly threatened with divorce, exile, and trial even, turned pale under her rouge, and could not refrain from saying:

"But why this visit, sire? What can the chancellor have to say to me that your Majesty could not say yourself?"

The king turned upon his heel without reply, and almost at the same instant the captain of the guards, M. de Guitaut, announced the visit of the chancellor.

When the chancellor appeared, the king had already gone out by another door.

The chancellor entered, half smiling, half blushing. As we shall probably meet with him again in the course of this history, there is no harm in our readers making his acquaintance at once.

This chancellor was a pleasant man. Des Roches le Masle, canon of Notre Dame, who had formerly been the cardinal's valet, had introduced him to his Eminence as a perfectly reliable man. The cardinal trusted him, and profited by his confidence.

There were many stories related of him, and among them the following:

After a wild youth, he had retired into a monastery, there to expiate, at least for some time, the follies of adolescence.

But, on entering this holy place, the poor penitent was unable to shut the door quick enough to prevent the passions he fled from entering with him. He was incessantly attacked by them, and the superior, to whom he confided this misfortune, wishing, as much as in him lay, to free him from them, had advised him, in order to conjure away the tempting demon, to have recourse to the bell-rope, and to ring with all his might. At the signal the monks would be made aware that temptation was besieging a brother, and all the community would offer prayers.

This advice seemed good to the future chancellor. Reinforced by the prayers offered up by the monks he tried to exorcise the evil spirit; but the devil does not suffer himself to be easily dispossessed of a place in which he has fixed his garrison. In proportion as they redoubled the exorcisms he redoubled the temptations, so that day and night the bell was ringing full swing, announcing the extreme desire for mortification which the penitent experienced.

The monks no longer had an instant of repose. By day they did nothing but ascend and descend the steps which led to the chapel. At night, in addition to compline and matins,

they were further obliged to leap twenty times out of their beds and prostrate themselves on the flagging of their cells.

It is not known whether it was the devil who gave way, or the monks who grew tired; but within three months the penitent reappeared in the world with the reputation of being the most terrible possessed one that ever existed.

On leaving the monastery, he entered into the magistracy, became president of a court in the place of his uncle, embraced the cardinal's party, thereby showing no little sagacity, became chancellor, served his Eminence with zeal in his hatred against the queen-mother, and in his vengeance on Anne of Austria, urged on the judges in the affair of Chalais, encouraged the endeavors of M. de Laffemas, chief game-keeper of France; then at length, clothed with the entire confidence of the cardinal, a confidence which he had so well earned, he received the singular commission for the execution of which he presented himself in the queen's apartments.

The queen was still standing when he entered, but scarcely had she perceived him when she reseated herself in her arm-chair, made a sign to her women to resume their cushions and stools, and, with an air of supreme hauteur, said:

"What do you desire, sir, and with what object in view do you present yourself here?"

"To make, madame, in the name of the king, and without prejudice to the respect which I have the honor to owe to your Majesty, a strict search into all your papers."

"How, sir! a search into my papers!—mine! Truly, this is an unworthy proceeding!"

"Be kind enough to pardon me, madame; but on this occasion I am but the instrument which the king employs. Has not his Majesty just left you? and has he not himself desired you to prepare for this visit?"

"Examine, then, sir. I am a criminal, as it appears. Estefana, give up the keys of my tables and my secretaries."

For form's sake the chancellor paid a visit to the pieces of furniture named, but he well knew that the queen would not place in a piece of furniture the important letter she had written in the course of the day.

When the chancellor had opened and shut twenty times the drawers of the secretaries, it became necessary, whatever hesitation he might experience, — it became necessary, I say, to come to the conclusion of the affair; that is, to search the queen herself. The chancellor advanced, therefore, toward

Anne of Austria, and in a tone of great perplexity and with an embarrassed air —

"And now," said he, "it remains for me to make the principal search."

"What is that?" asked the queen, who did not understand, or rather did not wish to understand.

"His Majesty is certain that a letter has been written by you in the course of the day. He knows that it has not yet been sent to its address. This letter is not in your table-drawers nor in your secretary; and yet this letter must be somewhere."

"Would you dare to place your hand upon your queen?" said Anne of Austria, drawing herself up to her full height, and fixing her eyes upon the chancellor with an expression which had become almost threatening.

"I am an humble subject of the king, madame, and all that his Majesty commands, I shall do."

"Well, that is true!" said Anne of Austria; "and the cardinal's spies have served him faithfully. I have written a letter to-day; that letter is not yet gone. That letter is here."

And the queen laid her beautiful hand on her bosom.

"Then give me that letter, madame," said the chancellor.

"I will give it to none but the king, sir," said Anne.

"If the king had desired that the letter should be given to him, madame, he would have demanded it of you himself, and if you do not give it up —"

"Well?"

"He has, then, charged me to take it from you."

"How! What do you mean?"

"That my orders go far, madame; and that I am authorized to seek for the suspected paper, even on the person of your Majesty."

"What horror!" cried the queen.

"Be kind enough then, madame, to act more compliantly."

"This conduct is infamously violent! Do you know that, sir?"

"The king commands it, madame; excuse me."

"I will not suffer it! no, no, I would rather die!" cried the queen, with whom the imperious blood of Spain and Austria began to rise.

The chancellor made a profound reverence. Then, with the quite evident intention of not yielding an inch in the accomplishment of the commission with which he was charged, and as the attendant of an executioner might have done in the

chamber of torture, he approached Anne of Austria, from whose eyes at the same instant sprang tears of rage.

The queen was, as we have said, of great beauty. The commission might, then, pass for a delicate one; and the king, in his jealousy of Buckingham, had reached the point of being no longer jealous of any one.

Undoubtedly the Chancellor Séguier looked about at that moment for the rope of the famous bell. But, not finding it, he summoned his resolution, and stretched out his hands toward the place where the queen had acknowledged the paper was to be found.

Anne of Austria took one step backward, grew so pale that it might be said she was dying, and leaning with her left hand, to keep herself from falling upon a table behind her, she with her right hand drew the paper from her bosom, and held it out to the keeper of the seals.

"There, sir, there is that letter!" cried the queen, in a broken and trembling voice; "take it, and deliver me from your odious presence."

The chancellor, who on his part trembled with an emotion easily conceived, took the letter, bowed to the ground, and retired.

The door was scarcely closed upon him when the queen sank, half-fainting, into the arms of her women.

The chancellor carried the letter to the king without having read a single word of it. The king took it with a trembling hand, looked for the address which was wanting, became very pale, opened it slowly, then seeing by the first words that it was addressed to the king of Spain, he read it rapidly.

It was nothing but a plan of an attack against the cardinal. The queen urged her brother and the Emperor of Austria, hurt as they really were by Richelieu's policy, the eternal object of which was the abasement of the house of Austria, to pretend to declare war against France, and as a condition of peace to insist upon the dismissal of the cardinal. But as to love, there was not a single word about it in all the letter.

The king, quite delighted, inquired whether the cardinal was still at the Louvre. He was told that his Eminence was waiting his Majesty's orders in his office.

The king went straight to him.

"There, duke," said he, "you were right, and I was wrong. The whole intrigue is political, and there is not the least question of love here in this letter. But, on the other hand, there is great question of you."

The cardinal took the letter, and read it with the greatest attention. Then when he had reached the end of it, he read it a second time.

"Well, your Majesty," said he, "you see how far my enemies go; they threaten you with two wars if you do not dismiss me. In your place, in truth, sire, I should yield to such powerful demands, and on my part it would be a real happiness to withdraw from public affairs."

"What's that you are saying, duke!"

"I say, sire, that my health is sinking under these burdensome struggles and these never-ending labors. I say that according to all probability I shall not be able to undergo the fatigues of the siege of Rochelle, and that it would be far better that you should appoint there either M. de Condé, M. de Bassompierre, or some valiant gentleman whose business is war, and not me who am a churchman, and who am constantly turned aside from my real vocation to look after matters for which I have no aptitude. You would be the happier for it at home, sire, and I do not doubt you would be the greater for it abroad."

"Duke," said the king, "I understand you. Be assured all who are named in that letter shall be punished as they deserve, and the queen herself."

"What do you say, sire? God forbid that the queen should suffer the least uneasiness on my account! She has always believed me to be her enemy, sire, although your Majesty can bear witness that I have always taken her part warmly, even against you. Oh! if she betrayed your Majesty on the side of your honor, it would be quite another thing, and I should be the first to say, 'No mercy, sire, — no mercy for the guilty!' Fortunately, there is nothing of the kind, and your Majesty has just acquired a fresh proof of it."

"That is true, cardinal," said the king, "and you were right, as you always are; but the queen none the less deserves all my anger."

"Sire, you have now incurred hers. And even if she were to be seriously offended, I could well understand it. Your Majesty has treated her with severity —"

"So I shall always treat my enemies and yours, duke, however high they may be placed, and whatever peril I may incur in acting severely towards them."

"The queen is my enemy, but not yours, sire. On the contrary, she is a devoted, submissive, and irreproachable wife. Allow me then, sire, to intercede for her with your Majesty"

"Let her humble herself, then, and come to me first."

"On the contrary, sire, set the example. You have committed the first wrong, since it was you who suspected the queen."

"What! I make advances first!" said the king; "never."

"Sire, I entreat you to do so."

"Besides, how can I make advances first?"

"By doing a thing which you know will be agreeable to her."

"What is that?"

"Give a ball; you know how much the queen loves dancing. I will answer for it, her resentment will not hold out against such an attention."

"Cardinal, you know that I do not like mundane pleasures."

"The queen will only be the more grateful to you, as she knows your antipathy for that amusement. Besides, it will be an opportunity for her to wear those beautiful diamonds which you gave her recently, on her birthday, and with which she has since had no occasion to adorn herself."

"We shall see, cardinal, we shall see," said the king, who in his joy at finding the queen guilty of a crime which he cared little about, and innocent of a fault of which he had great dread, was ready to make up all differences with her; "we shall see; but, upon my honor, you are too indulgent toward her."

"Sire," said the cardinal, "leave severity to your ministers; clemency is a royal virtue; employ it, and you will find you will profit by it."

Upon which the cardinal, hearing the clock strike eleven, bowed low, demanding permission of the king to retire, and supplicating him to come to a good understanding with the queen.

Anne of Austria, who, in consequence of the seizure of her letter, expected reproaches, was much astonished the next day to see the king make some attempts at reconciliation with her. Her first movement was one of repulse; her womanly pride and her queenly dignity had both been so cruelly outraged that she could not come round at once. But, overcome by the advice of her women, she at last had the appearance of beginning to forget. The king took advantage of this favorable moment to tell her that he had the intention of shortly giving a fête.

A fête was so rare a thing for poor Anne of Austria that at

this announcement, as the cardinal had predicted, the last trace of her resentment disappeared, if not from her heart, at least from her countenance. She asked upon what day this fête would take place, but the king replied that he must consult the cardinal upon that head.

In fact, every day the king asked the cardinal when this fête should take place, and every day the cardinal, under some pretence or other, deferred fixing it. Ten days passed away in this manner.

A week after the scene we have described, the cardinal received a letter with the London stamp, which contained only these few lines:

"I have them, but I am unable to leave London for want of money. Send me five hundred pistoles, and four or five days after I have received them I shall be in Paris."

On the same day that the cardinal received this letter, the king put his customary question to him.

Richelieu counted on his fingers, and said to himself:

"She will arrive, she says, four or five days after having received the money. It will require four or five days for the transmission of the money, four or five days for her to return, that makes ten days. Now, allowing for contrary winds, accidents, and woman's frailties, we cannot make it, altogether, less than twelve days."

"Well, duke," said the king, "have you made your calculations?"

"Yes, sire. To-day is the 20th of September. The provosts of the city give a fête on the 3d of October. That will fall in wonderfully well. You will not appear to have gone out of your way to please the queen."

Then the cardinal added:

"By the way, sire, do not forget to tell her Majesty, the evening before the ball, that you would like to see how her diamond studs become her."

CHAPTER XVII.

BONACIEUX'S HOUSEHOLD.

It was the second time the cardinal had mentioned these diamond studs to the king. Louis XIII. was struck with his insistence, and began to fancy that this recommendation concealed some mystery.

More than once the king had been humiliated that the cardinal, whose police, without having yet attained the perfection of the modern police, was excellent, was better informed than himself even upon what was going on in his own household. He hoped, then, in a conversation with Anne of Austria, to obtain some additional information, and afterwards to come upon his Eminence with some secret which the cardinal either knew or did not know, but which, in either case, would raise him infinitely in his minister's eyes.

He went then to the queen, and, according to his custom, approached her with new threats against those who surrounded her. Anne of Austria hung down her head, allowed the torrent to flow on without replying, and hoped that it would finally cease of itself. But this was not what Louis XIII. wanted. Louis XIII. wanted a discussion, from which some light or other might break, convinced as he was that the cardinal was practising some dissimulation, and was preparing for him one of those terrible surprises which his Eminence was so skilful in getting up. He arrived at this end by his persistence in accusation.

"But," cried Anne of Austria, tired of these vague attacks, "but, sire, you do not tell me all that you have in your heart. What have I done, then? Let me know what crime I have committed? It is impossible that your Majesty can make all this ado about a letter written to my brother!"

The king, attacked in so direct a manner, did not know what to answer. He thought that this was the moment to express the desire which he was to make only on the eve of the ball.

"Madame," said he, with dignity, "there will shortly be a ball at the City Hall. I wish that, in honor to our worthy provosts, you should appear at it in state dress, and particularly ornamented with the diamond studs which I gave you on your birthday. That is my answer."

It was a terrible answer. Anne of Austria believed that Louis XIII. knew all, and that the cardinal had persuaded him to employ this long dissimulation of seven or eight days, which, to be sure, was characteristic of the king also. She became excessively pale, leaned her beautiful hand upon a stand, a hand which then appeared like one of wax, and looking at the king, with terror in her eyes, she was unable to reply by a single syllable.

"You hear, madame," said the king, who enjoyed this embarrassment to its full extent, but without guessing the cause, — "you hear, madame?"

"Yes, sire, I hear," stammered the queen.

"You will appear at this ball?"

"Yes."

"And with those studs?"

"Yes."

The queen's paleness increased, if possible. The king perceived it, and enjoyed it with that cold cruelty which was one of the worst sides of his character.

"Then that is agreed upon," said the king, "and that is all I had to say to you."

"But on what day will this ball take place?" asked Anne of Austria.

Louis XIII. felt instinctively that he ought not to reply to this question, the queen having put it in an almost inaudible voice.

"Oh! very shortly, madame," said he, "but I do not recollect the exact date of the day. I will ask the cardinal."

"It was the cardinal, then, who informed you of this ball," cried the queen.

"Yes, madame," replied the astonished king. "But why do you ask that?"

"It was he who told you to ask me to appear there with those studs?"

"That is to say, madame, —"

"It was he, sire, it was he!"

"Well, and what does it signify whether it was he or I? Is there any crime in this request?"

"No, sire."

"Then you will appear?"

"Yes, sire."

"Very well," said the king, retiring; "very well, I count on it."

The queen made a courtesy, less from etiquette than because her knees were sinking under her.

"I am lost," murmured the queen, "lost! for the cardinal knows all, and it is he who urges on the king, who as yet knows nothing, but will soon know everything. I am lost! my God! my God!"

She knelt upon a cushion and prayed, with her head buried between her palpitating arms.

In fact, her position was terrible. Buckingham had returned to London, Madame de Chevreuse was at Tours. More closely watched than ever, the queen felt certain that one of her women was playing her false, but she could not know to tell which. La Porte could not leave the Louvre. She had not a soul in the world in whom she could confide.

Thus, while contemplating the misfortune which threatened her and the abandonment in which she was left, she broke out into sobs and tears.

"Can I be of no service to your Majesty?" said all at once a voice full of sweetness and pity.

The queen turned quickly round, for there could be no mistake in the tone of that voice. It was a friend who spoke thus.

In fact, at one of the doors which opened into the queen's apartment appeared the pretty Madame Bonacieux. She had been engaged in arranging the dresses and linen in a closet when the king entered. She could not get out, and had heard all.

The queen uttered a piercing cry at finding herself discovered, for in her trouble she did not at first recognize the young woman who had been given to her by La Porte.

"Oh! fear nothing, madame!" said the young woman, clasping her hands, and weeping herself at the queen's sorrow; "I am your Majesty's, body and soul, and however far I may be from you, however inferior may be my position, I believe I have discovered a means of extricating your Majesty from your trouble."

"You! oh, heaven! you!" cried the queen; "but look me in the face. I am betrayed on all sides. Can I trust in you?"

"Oh! madame!" cried the young woman, falling on her knees, "upon my soul, I am ready to die for your Majesty!"

This expression came from the very bottom of the heart, and, like the first, there was no mistaking it.

"Yes," continued Madame Bonacieux, "yes, there are traitors here, but by the holy name of the Virgin, I swear that none is more devoted to your Majesty than I am. Those studs, which the king speaks of, you gave them to the Duke of Buckingham, did you not? Those studs were in a little rosewood box, which he held under his arm? Am I mistaken? Is it not so, madame?"

"Yes."

"Well, those studs," continued Madame Bonacieux, "we must have them back again."

"Yes, without doubt, it is necessary," cried the queen. "But what can be done? How can it be effected?"

"Some one must be sent to the duke."

"But who? who? in whom can I trust?"

"Place confidence in me, madame. Do me that honor, my queen, and I will find a messenger."

"But I must write."

"Oh, yes. That is indispensable. Two words from the hand of your Majesty and your own private seal."

"But these two words are my condemnation, divorce, exile!"

"Yes, if they fell into infamous hands. But I will answer for these two words being delivered to their address."

"Oh! my God! I must then place my life, my honor, my reputation, all in your hands?"

"Yes, yes, madame, you must, and I will save them all."

"But how — tell me at least how?"

"My husband was set at liberty two or three days ago. I have not yet had time to see him again. He is a worthy, honest man, who entertains neither love nor hatred for anybody. He will do anything I wish. He will set out upon receiving an order from me, without knowing what he carries, and he will remit your Majesty's letter, without even knowing it is from your Majesty, to the address which it bears."

The queen took the young woman's two hands with a burst of emotion, gazed at her as if to read her very heart, and seeing nothing but sincerity in her beautiful eyes, kissed her tenderly.

"Do that," cried she, "and you will have saved my life, you will have saved my honor!"

"Oh! do not exaggerate the service I have the happiness to render your Majesty. I have nothing to save for your Majesty. You are only the victim of perfidious plots."

"That is true, that is true, my child," said the queen, "you are right."

"Give me then that letter, madame. Time presses."

The queen ran to a little table, upon which were pens, ink, and paper. She wrote two lines, sealed the letter with her private seal, and gave it to Madame Bonacieux.

"And now," said the queen, "we are forgetting one very necessary thing."

"What is that, madame?"

"Money."

Madame Bonacieux blushed.

"Yes, that is true," said she, "and I will confess to your Majesty that my husband —"

"Your husband has none. Is that what you mean?"

"Oh! yes, he has some, but he is very close; that is his fault. Nevertheless, let not your Majesty be uneasy, we will find means —"

"And I have none, either," said the queen. (Those who have read the Memoirs of Madame de Motteville will not be astonished at this reply.) "But wait a minute."

Anne of Austria ran to her jewel-case.

"Here," said she, "here is a ring of great value, as I have been told. It came from my brother, the king of Spain. It is mine, and I am at liberty to dispose of it. Take this ring, turn it into money, and let your husband set out."

"In an hour, you shall be obeyed, madame."

"You see the address," said the queen, speaking so low that Madame Bonacieux could hardly hear what she said. — "To my Lord Duke of Buckingham, London."

"The letter shall be given to him."

"Generous girl!" cried Anne of Austria.

Madame Bonacieux kissed the queen's hands, concealed the paper in the bosom of her dress, and disappeared with the lightness of a bird.

Ten minutes afterwards, she was at home. As she told the queen, she had not seen her husband since his liberation; she was ignorant of the change that had taken place in him with respect to the cardinal, a change which had since been strengthened by two or three visits from the Comte de Rochefort, who had become Bonacieux's best friend, and who had persuaded him without great difficulty that nothing culpable had been intended by the carrying off of his wife, but that it was only a piece of political precaution.

She found Bonacieux alone. The poor man, with much trouble, was putting his house in order, the furniture of which he had found mostly broken, and his chests and drawers mostly empty, the administration of justice not being one of the three things which King Solomon named as leaving no traces of their passage. The maid servant had run away at the moment of her master's arrest. Terror had had such an effect upon the poor girl that after leaving Paris she had never stopped walking a minute till she reached Burgundy, her native country.

The worthy mercer had, immediately on entering his house, communicated to his wife the news of his happy return, and his wife had replied by congratulating him, and telling him that the first moment she could steal from her duties should be devoted to paying him a visit.

This first moment had been delayed five days, which, under any other circumstances, might have appeared rather long to Master Bonacieux. But he had, in the visit he had made to

the cardinal, and in the visits Rochefort had made him, ample subjects for reflection, and, as everybody knows, nothing makes time pass more quickly than reflection.

This was the more so because Bonacieux's reflections were all rose-colored. Rochefort called him his friend, his dear Bonacieux, and never ceased telling him that the cardinal thought a great deal of him. The mercer fancied himself already on the high road to honors and fortune.

Madame Bonacieux had also reflected, but, it must be admitted, upon something widely different from ambition. In spite of herself, her thoughts constantly reverted to that handsome young man, who was so brave and appeared to be so much in love. Married at eighteen to Monsieur Bonacieux, having always lived among her husband's friends, people thoroughly incapable of inspiring any sentiment whatever in a young woman whose heart was above her position, Madame Bonacieux had remained insensible to common seductions. But at this period the title of nobleman had a particularly great influence with the citizen class, and D'Artagnan was a nobleman. Besides, he wore the uniform of the guards, which, next to that of the musketeers, was most admired by the ladies. He was, we repeat, handsome, young, and bold; he spoke of love like a man who did love, and was anxious to be loved in return. There was certainly more than enough in all this to turn a head only twenty-three years old, and Madame Bonacieux had just attained that happy period of life.

The married couple then, although they had not seen each other for more than a week, and although during that time serious events, in which both were concerned, had taken place, accosted each other with a certain amount of preoccupation. Nevertheless, M. Bonacieux manifested real joy, and advanced towards his wife with open arms.

Madame Bonacieux offered him her forehead to kiss.

"Let us talk a little," said she.

"What!" said Bonacieux, astonished.

"Yes; I have something of great importance to tell you."

"True," said he, "and I also have some quite serious questions to put to you. Describe to me how you were carried off, I beg of you."

"Oh! that does not concern us now," said Madame Bonacieux.

"What? My captivity?"

"I heard of it the day it happened; but as you were not

guilty of any crime, as you were not guilty of any intrigue, as you, in short, knew nothing that could compromise yourself or anybody else, I attached no more importance to that event than it deserved."

"You speak very lightly of it, madame," said Bonacieux, hurt at the little interest his wife seemed to take in him. "Do you know that I was buried during a whole day and a whole night in a dungeon of the Bastille?"

"Oh! a day and night soon pass away. Let us leave your imprisonment, then, and return to what brings me to you."

"What! to what brings you to me! Is it not the desire of seeing a husband again from whom you have been separated for a week?" asked the mercer, very much piqued.

"Yes, that first, and other things afterwards."

"Speak, then."

"It is a thing of the highest interest, and upon which our future fortune perhaps depends."

"The complexion of our fortune has changed very much since I saw you, Madame Bonacieux, and I should not be astonished if, in the course of a few months, it were to excite the envy of many folks."

"Yes, particularly if you will follow the instructions I am about to give you."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. There is a good and holy action to be performed, sir, and much money to be gained at the same time."

Madame Bonacieux knew that in speaking of money to her husband, she attacked him on his weak side. But a man, even though he be a mercer, after he has talked ten minutes with the Cardinal Richelieu, is no longer the same man.

"Much money to be gained?" said Bonacieux, protruding his lip.

"Yes, much."

"About how much, pray?"

"A thousand pistoles, perhaps."

"Humph! What you have to ask of me, then, is very serious!"

"It is indeed."

"What is to be done?"

"You must set out immediately. I will give you a paper which you must not part with on any account, and which you will deliver into the proper hands."

"And where am I to go?"

"London."

"I go to London! You are joking; I have nothing to do in London."

"But others require that you should go there."

"But who are those others? I warn you that I will never again work in the dark, and that I will know not only to what I expose myself, but for whom I expose myself."

"An illustrious person sends you, an illustrious person awaits you. The recompense will exceed your expectations — that is all I promise you."

"More intrigues! nothing but intrigues! Thank you, madame, I am aware of them now. The cardinal has enlightened me on that head."

"The cardinal?" cried Madame Bonacieux; "have you seen the cardinal?"

"He sent for me," answered the mercer, proudly.

"And you went, you imprudent man!"

"Well, I can't say I had much choice in going or not going, for I was taken to him between two guards. I must also confess that as I did not then know his Eminence, if I had been able to decline the visit I should have been delighted to do so."

"He ill-treated you then? He threatened you?"

"He gave me his hand, and he called me his friend — his friend! do you hear that, madame? I am a friend of the great cardinal!"

"Of the great cardinal!"

"Perhaps you would dispute his right to that title, madame?"

"Oh, I would dispute his right to nothing; but I tell you that a minister's favor is ephemeral, and that a man must be mad to attach himself to a minister. There are powers above his which do not depend upon the caprice of a man or the issue of an event; it is around these powers we must rally."

"I am sorry for it, madame, but I acknowledge no other power than that of the great man whom I have the honor to serve."

"You serve the cardinal?"

"Yes, madame, and as his servant I will not allow you to be concerned in plots against the safety of the state, or to assist in the intrigues of a woman who is not a Frenchwoman, and who has a Spanish heart. Fortunately, we have the great cardinal; his vigilant eye watches over all and penetrates to the bottom of the heart."

Bonacieux was repeating, word for word, a sentence which

he had heard the Comte de Rochefort use. But the poor woman, who had reckoned on her husband, and who, in that hope, had answered for him to the queen, trembled all the more, both at the danger into which she had nearly thrown herself, and at the helpless state to which she was reduced. Nevertheless, knowing her husband's weakness, and more particularly his cupidity, she did not despair of bringing him round to her purpose.

"Ah! you are a Cardinalist, then, sir, are you!" cried she, "and you serve the party of those who ill-treat your wife and insult your queen!"

"Private interests are as nothing before the interests of all. I am for those who are saving the state," said Bonacieux, emphatically.

This was another of Comte de Rochefort's sentences which he had retained, and which he now found the opportunity to use.

"And do you know what that state is you talk about?" demanded Madame Bonacieux, shrugging her shoulders. "Be satisfied with being a plain, straightforward bourgeois, and turn your attention toward that side which holds out the greatest advantages."

"Eh! eh!" said Bonacieux, slapping a plump, round bag, which gave back a silvery sound; "what do you think of this, my lady preacher?"

"Where does that money come from?"

"Can't you guess?"

"From the cardinal?"

"From him and from my friend the Comte de Rochefort."

"The Comte de Rochefort! Why, it was he who carried me off!"

"Perhaps it was, madame."

"And you receive money from that man!"

"Did you not yourself tell me that the carrying off was entirely political?"

"Yes, but that abduction had for its object to make me betray my mistress, to draw from me, by tortures, confessions which might have compromised the honor and perhaps the life of my august mistress."

"Madame," replied Bonacieux, "your august mistress is a perfidious Spaniard, and what the cardinal does is well done."

"Sir," said the young woman, "I knew you to be cowardly, avaricious, and weak, but I never till now believed you to be infamous!"

"Madame," said Bonacieux, who had never seen his wife in a passion, and who retreated before this conjugal anger, "madame, what is that you say?"

"I say you are a miserable mean creature!" continued Madame Bonacieux, who saw she was regaining some little influence over her husband. "You meddle with politics, do you! And still more with cardinalist politics! Why, you are selling yourself, body and soul, to the devil for money!"

"No, but to the cardinal."

"It's the same thing!" cried the young woman. "Who names Richelieu names satan."

"Hold your tongue! hold your tongue. madame· we may be overheard."

"Yes, you are right. I should be ashamed for any one to know your baseness."

"But what do you require of me, then? Come, let us see?"

"I have told you. You must set out instantly, sir; you must accomplish loyally the commission with which I deign to charge you, and on that condition I pardon everything, I forget everything; and still further,"—and she held out her hand to him,—"I give you my love again."

Bonacieux was a coward, and he was avaricious, but he loved his wife, he was softened. A man of fifty cannot long harbor malice against a pretty wife of twenty-three. Madame Bonacieux saw that he was hesitating.

"Come! have you made up your mind?" said she.

"But, my dear love, reflect a little upon what you require of me. London is far from Paris, very far, and perhaps the commission with which you charge me is not without dangers?"

"Of what consequence is that, if you avoid them?"

"Well, then, Madame Bonacieux," said the mercer, "well, then, I positively refuse. Intrigues terrify me. I have seen the Bastille; Brrrrou!—it's a frightful place, that Bastille! Only to think of it makes my flesh creep. They threatened me with torture! Do you know what the torture is? Wooden points that they stick in between your legs till your bones break in pieces! No, positively, I will not go. And, 's death! why do you not go yourself? for, in truth, I think I have hitherto been deceived in you. I really believe you are a man, and a most violent one too."

"And you, you are a woman, a miserable woman, foolish and stupid. You are afraid, are you? Well, if you do not go this very instant, I will have you arrested by the queen's

orders, and I will have you placed in that Bastille which you dread so much."

Bonacieux fell into a profound reflection. He turned the two angers in his brain — the cardinal's and the queen's. The cardinal's predominated enormously.

"Have me arrested in behalf of the queen," said he, "and I — I will appeal to his Eminence."

At once Madame Bonacieux saw that she had gone too far, and she was terrified at having communicated so much. She for a moment contemplated with terror that stupid countenance, bearing the imprint of a resolution as invincible as the resolution of fools overcome by fear.

"Well, be it so!" said she. "Perhaps, taking it all in all, you are right. In the long run, a man knows more about politics than a woman does, particularly you, Monsieur Bonacieux, who have conversed with the cardinal. And yet it is very hard," added she, "that a man upon whose affection I thought I might depend treats me thus unkindly, and will not comply with any of my fancies."

"That is because your fancies might lead too far," replied the triumphant Bonacieux, "and I mistrust them."

"Well, I will give it up, then," said the young woman, sighing. "It is well as it is; say no more about it."

"Supposing, at least, you should tell me what I should have to do in London," replied Bonacieux, who remembered a little too late that Rochefort had desired him to endeavor to obtain his wife's secrets.

"It is of no use for you to know anything about it," said the young woman, who drew back now by an instinctive mistrust. "It was about one of those follies of interest to women, a purchase by which much might have been gained."

But the more the young woman fought shy of committing herself, the more important Bonacieux conceived to be the secret which she declined to communicate to him. He resolved, then, that instant to hasten to the Comte de Rochefort, and tell him that the queen was looking for a messenger to send to London.

"Pardon me for leaving you, my dear Madame Bonacieux," said he; "but not knowing you would come to see me, I had made an engagement with a friend. I shall soon return, and if you will wait only a few minutes for me, as soon as I have concluded my business with that friend, I will come to get you, and, as it is growing late, I will conduct you back to the Louvre."

"No, thank you, sir, you are not brave enough to be of any use to me whatever," replied Madame Bonacieux. "I shall return very safely to the Louvre by myself."

"As you please, Madame Bonacieux," said the ex-mercer. "Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you soon again?"

"Yes, next week I hope my duties will afford me a little liberty, and I will take advantage of it to come and set things to rights here, as they must be somewhat upset."

"Very well; I shall expect you. You are not angry with me?"

"Who, I? Oh! not the least in the world."

"Farewell, till then."

"Till then."

Bonacieux kissed his wife's hand and set off at a quick pace.

"Well!" said Madame Bonacieux when her husband had shut the street door and she found herself alone, "the only thing still lacking that fool was to become a Cardinalist! And I, who have answered for him to the queen! I, who have promised my poor mistress! Ah! my God! my God! she will take me for one of those wretches who swarm the palace, and are placed about her as spies! Ah! Monsieur Bonacieux! I never did love you much, but now it is worse than ever. I hate you! and by my word you shall pay for this!"

At the moment she spoke these words a rap on the ceiling made her raise her head, and a voice which reached her through the flooring cried:

"Dear Madame Bonacieux, open the little side door for me, and I will come down to you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOVER AND THE HUSBAND.

"Ah! madame," said D'Artagnan, as he entered by the door which the young woman had opened for him, "allow me to tell you that you have a sorry husband there!"

"Then you overheard our conversation?" asked Madame Bonacieux eagerly, and looking at D'Artagnan with much uneasiness.

"The whole of it."

"But, my God! how could you do that?"

"By a method known to myself, and by which I likewise overheard the more animated conversation which you had with the cardinal's bailiffs."

"And what did you understand by what we said?"

"A thousand things. In the first place, that, fortunately, your husband is a simpleton and a fool. In the next place, that you are in trouble, of which I am very glad, as it gives me an opportunity of placing myself at your service, and God knows I am ready to throw myself into the fire for you. And that the queen wants a brave, intelligent, devoted man to make a journey to London for her. I have, at least, two of the three qualities you stand in need of — and here I am."

Madame Bonacieux made no reply, but her heart beat with joy, and a secret hope shone in her eyes.

"And what pledge can you give me," asked she, "if I consent to confide this message to you?"

"My love for you. Speak! command! What must I do?"

"My God! my God!" murmured the young woman, "ought I to confide such a secret to you, sir? You are almost a boy!"

"I suppose, then, you require some one to answer for me?"

"I admit that that would reassure me greatly."

"Do you know Athos?"

"No."

"Porthos?"

"No."

"Aramis?"

"No; who are those gentlemen?"

"Three of the king's musketeers. Do you know M. de Tréville, their captain?"

"Oh! yes, him — I know him; not personally, but from having heard the queen speak of him more than once as a brave and loyal gentleman."

"You are not afraid that he would betray you for the cardinal, are you?"

"Oh! no, certainly not."

"Well, reveal your secret to him, and ask him whether, however important, however valuable, however terrible it may be, you may not safely confide it to me."

"But this secret is not mine, and I cannot reveal it in this manner."

"Why, you were going to confide it to M. Bonacieux," said D'Artagnan in vexation.

"As we confide a letter to the hollow of a tree, to the wing of a pigeon, or the collar of a dog."

"And yet — you see plainly that I love you."

"You say so."

"I am an honorable man."

"I believe so."

"I am brave."

"Oh! I am sure of that."

"Then put me to the proof."

Madame Bonacieux, restrained by a last hesitation, looked at the young man. But there was such ardor in his eyes, such persuasion in his voice, that she felt herself drawn on to place confidence in him. Besides, she was in one of those circumstances in which everything must be risked for the sake of everything. The queen might also be as much injured by too great discretion as by too great confidence, and — let us admit it — the involuntary sentiment which she felt for her young protector compelled her to speak.

"Listen," said she; "I yield to your protestations, I submit to your assurances. But I swear to you, before God who hears us, that if you betray me and my enemies pardon me, I will kill myself while accusing you of my death."

"And I — I swear to you before God, madame," said D'Artagnan, "that if I am taken while accomplishing the orders you give me, I will die sooner than do anything, or say anything, that may compromise any one."

Then the young woman confided to him the terrible secret a part of which had already been revealed to him, by chance, in front of the Samaritaine.

This was their mutual declaration of love.

D'Artagnan was radiant with joy and pride. This secret which he possessed, this woman whom he loved — confidence and love made him a giant.

"I will go," said he, "I will go at once."

"How! you will go!" said Madame Bonacieux; "and your regiment, your captain?"

"By my soul, you made me forget all that, dear Constance! Yes, you are right, I must obtain leave of absence."

"That is another obstacle," murmured Madame Bonacieux, sorrowfully.

"Whatever it may be," cried D'Artagnan, after a moment of reflection, "I shall surmount it, be assured."

"How?"

"I will go this very evening to M. de Tréville, whom I will request to ask this favor for me of his brother-in-law, M. des Essarts."

"But still there is another thing."

"What is that?" asked D'Artagnan, seeing that Madame Bonacieux hesitated to proceed.

"You have, perhaps, no money?"

"Perhaps is too much," said D'Artagnan, smiling.

"Then," replied Madame Bonacieux, opening a cupboard and taking from it the very bag which half an hour before her husband had caressed so affectionately, "take this bag."

"The cardinal's!" cried D'Artagnan, breaking into a loud laugh, he having heard, as may be remembered, thanks to his broken floor, every syllable of the conversation between the mercer and his wife.

"The cardinal's," replied Madame Bonacieux. "You see it makes a very respectable appearance."

"Zounds!" cried D'Artagnan, "it will be a doubly amusing affair to save the queen with his Eminence's money!"

"You are an amiable and charming young man!" said Madame Bonacieux. "Be assured you will not find her Majesty ungrateful."

"Oh! I am already more than recompensed!" cried D'Artagnan. "I love you; you permit me to tell you that I do: that is already more happiness than I dared to hope for."

"Silence!" said Madame Bonacieux, starting.

"What!"

"Some one is talking in the street."

"It is the voice of—"

"Of my husband! Oh, yes! I recognized it!"

D'Artagnan ran to the door and drew the bolt.

"He shall not come in before I am gone," said he; "and when I am gone, you can open the door for him."

"But I ought to be gone, too. And the disappearance of this money—how am I to justify it, if I am here?"

"You are right; we must go out."

"Go out? How? He will see us if we go out."

"Then you must come up into my room."

"Ah!" said Madame Bonacieux, "you say that in a tone which terrifies me!"

Madame Bonacieux pronounced these words with tears in her eyes. D'Artagnan saw those tears, and, much disturbed, softened, he threw himself at her feet.

"In my apartment you will be as safe as in a temple. I give you my word as a gentleman."

"Let us go, then. I place full confidence in you, my friend!"

D'Artagnan carefully drew back the bolt, and both, light as shadows, glided through the interior door into the passage, ascended the stairs as quietly as possible, and entered D'Artagnan's apartment.

Once in his apartment, for greater security the young man barricaded the door. They both went up to the window, and, through a slit in the shutter, they saw M. Bonacieux talking with a man in a cloak.

At the sight of this man, D'Artagnan started, half drew his sword, and sprang towards the door.

It was the man of Meung.

"What are you going to do?" cried Madame Bonacieux; "you will ruin us all!"

"But I have sworn to kill that man!" said D'Artagnan.

"At this time your life is devoted, and does not belong to you! In the name of the queen, I forbid you to throw yourself into any danger which is foreign to that of your journey!"

"And do you command nothing in your own name?"

"In my name?" said Madame Bonacieux, with great emotion; "in my name, I beg of you! But listen: they appear to be speaking of me."

D'Artagnan drew near the window and listened.

M. Bonacieux had opened his door, and, seeing the apartment empty, had returned to the man in the cloak, whom he had left alone for an instant.

"She is gone," said he; "she must have gone back to the Louvre."

"You are sure," replied the stranger, "that she did not suspect the intention you had when you went out?"

"No," replied Bonacieux, with a self-sufficient air, "she is too superficial a woman."

"Is the young guardsman at home?"

"I do not think he is; as you see, his shutter is closed, and there is no light shining through the chinks of the shutters."

"That's true; but it's just as well to be certain."

"How can we be so?"

"By knocking at his door."

"Go."

"I will ask his servant."

Bonacieux went into the house again, passed through the same door that had afforded a passage for the two fugitives, went up to D'Artagnan's door, and knocked.

No one answered. Porthos, to make a greater display, had that evening borrowed Planchet. D'Artagnan himself took care not to give the least sign of existence.

At the moment that Bonacieux's fist sounded on the door, the two young people felt their hearts bound within them.

"There is nobody in his room," said Bonacieux.

"All the same let us walk into your apartment. We shall be safer there than in the doorway."

"Oh! Good God!" whispered Madame Bonacieux, "we shall hear no more."

"On the contrary," said D'Artagnan, "we shall hear all the better."

D'Artagnan raised the three or four tiles which made of his chamber another ear of Dionysius, spread a carpet, went down upon his knees, and made a sign to Madame Bonacieux to stoop down toward the opening, as he did.

"You are sure there is nobody there?" said the unknown.

"I will answer for it," said Bonacieux.

"And you think that your wife —"

"Has returned to the Louvre."

"Without speaking to any one but yourself?"

"I am sure of it."

"Please to understand that is an important point."

"So the news I brought you, then, has some value —"

"A very great value, my dear Bonacieux; I don't attempt to deny it."

"Then the cardinal will be pleased with me?"

"No doubt he will."

"The great cardinal!"

"Are you sure that in her conversation with you, your wife mentioned no proper names?"

"I don't think she did."

"She did not name Madame de Chevreuse, the Duke of Buckingham, or Madame de Vernet?"

"No; she only told me she wished to send me to London to further the interests of an illustrious personage."

"Oh! the traitor!" murmured Madame Bonacieux.

"Silence!" whispered D'Artagnan, taking a hand, which, without thinking of it, she suffered him to retain.

"Nevertheless," continued the man in the cloak, "it was very silly of you not to have feigned to accept the mission. You would now be in possession of the letter. The state, which is now threatened, would be safe; and you —"

"And I?"

"Well, you! The cardinal would have given you letters of nobility."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Yes, I know that he meant to afford you that agreeable surprise."

"Be calm," replied Bonacieux; "my wife adores me, and there is still plenty of time."

"The silly fool!" murmured Madame Bonacieux.

"Silence!" said D'Artagnan, pressing her hand more tightly.

"What do you mean by there being still time?" asked the man in the cloak.

"I will go to the Louvre, I will ask for Madame Bonacieux, I will tell her I have reflected upon the matter, I will resume the affair, obtain the letter, and then hasten directly to the cardinal's."

"Well! begone then! Make all possible haste. I will shortly come back to learn the result of your plan."

The unknown went out.

"The wretch!" said Madame Bonacieux, addressing this other affectionate epithet to her husband.

"Silence, once more!" said D'Artagnan, pressing her hand still more tightly.

A terrible howling interrupted these reflections of D'Artagnan and Madame Bonacieux. It was her husband, who had discovered the disappearance of his money-bag, and was screaming out, "Thieves! thieves!"

Bonacieux cried for a long time. But, as such cries, on account of their frequency, did not attract much notice in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, and as, besides, the mercer's house had not been for some time in very good repute, finding that nobody came, he went out, continuing to cry aloud, and his voice died away in the direction of the Rue du Bac.

"Now he is gone, it is your turn to go," said Madame Bonacieux. "Have courage, but, above all, prudence, and remember that it is your duty to the queen!"

"To her and to you!" cried D'Artagnan. "Be satisfied, lovely Constance. I shall become worthy of her gratitude, but shall I likewise return worthy of your love?"

The young woman replied only by the vivid blush which mounted to her cheeks. A few moments later, D'Artagnan went out in his turn, enveloped in a large cloak, which the sheath of a long sword held back cavalierly.

Madame Bonacieux followed him with her eyes, with that long, fond look with which a woman accompanies the man whom she feels she loves. But when he had turned the angle of the street, she fell on her knees, and, clasping her hands, —

"Oh! my God!" cried she, "protect the queen, protect me!"

CHAPTER XIX.

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

D'ARTAGNAN went straight to M. de Tréville's hôtel. He had considered that in a few minutes the cardinal would be warned by this cursed unknown, who appeared to be his agent, and he rightly judged he had not a moment to lose.

The young man's heart overflowed with joy. An opportunity presented itself to him in which there would be both glory and money to be gained, and, as a far higher encouragement still, had just brought him into close intimacy with the woman he adored. This chance was doing then for him, almost at once, more than he would have dared to ask of Providence.

M. de Tréville was in his drawing-room with his usual court of gentlemen. D'Artagnan, who was known as a familiar of the house, went straight to his office, and sent word to him that he wished to see him upon an affair of importance.

D'Artagnan had been there scarcely five minutes when M. de Tréville entered. At the first glance, and by the joy which was painted on his countenance, the worthy captain plainly perceived that something fresh was on foot.

All the way along, D'Artagnan had been deliberating whether he should place confidence in M. de Tréville, or whether he should only ask him to give him *carte blanche* for a secret affair. But M. de Tréville had always been so perfectly friendly, had always been so devoted to the king and queen, and hated the cardinal so cordially, that the young man resolved to tell him everything.

"You have something to say to me, my young friend?" said M. de Tréville.

"Yes, sir," said D'Artagnan, "and you will pardon me, I hope, for having disturbed you when you know the importance of my business."

"Speak, then, I am all attention."

"It concerns nothing less," said D'Artagnan, lowering his voice, "than the honor, perhaps the life, of the queen."

"What are you saying?" asked M. de Tréville, glancing round to see if they were alone, and then fixing his scrutinizing look upon D'Artagnan.

"I say, sir, that chance has rendered me master of a secret —"

"Which you will keep, I hope, young man, with your life."

"But which I must impart to you, sir, for you alone can assist me in the mission I have just received from her Majesty."

"Is this secret your own?"

"No, sir, it is the queen's."

"Are you authorized by her Majesty to communicate it to me?"

"No, sir, for, on the contrary, I am desired to preserve the profoundest secrecy."

"Why, then, are you about to betray it to me?"

"Because, as I said, without you I can do nothing, and I was afraid that you would refuse me the favor I have come to ask, if you did not know for what purpose I asked it."

"Keep your secret, young man, and tell me what you wish."

"I wish you to obtain for me, from M. des Essarts, leave of absence for a fortnight."

"When?"

"This very night."

"You are leaving Paris?"

"I am going on a mission."

"May you tell me where?"

"To London."

"Has any one an interest in preventing your reaching there?"

"The cardinal, I believe, would give anything in the world to hinder me from succeeding."

"And you are going alone?"

"I am going alone."

"In that case you will not get beyond Bondy. I tell you so, by the word of De Tréville."

"How so, sir?"

"You will be assassinated."

"And I shall die in the performance of my duty."

"But your mission will not be accomplished."

"That is true!" replied D'Artagnan.

"Believe me," continued Tréville, "in enterprises of this kind, four must set out, for one to arrive."

"Ah! you are right, sir," said D'Artagnan; "but you know Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and you know whether I can make use of them."

"Without confiding to them the secret which I did not wish to know?"

"We are sworn, once and forever, to implicit confidence and devotion against all proof. Besides, you can tell them that you have full confidence in me, and they will not be more incredulous than you."

"I can send to each of them leave of absence for a fortnight, that is all. Athos, whose wound still gives him inconvenience, to go to the waters of Forges; Porthos and Aramis to accompany their friend, whom they are not willing to abandon in such a painful position. Sending their leave of absence will be proof enough that I authorize their journey."

"Thanks, sir! You are a hundred times too good!"

"Go, then, and find them instantly, and let all be done to-night. Ah! but first write your request to M. des Essarts. You, perhaps, had a spy at your heels, and your visit —in that case already known to the cardinal — will be thus made regular."

D'Artagnan drew up his request, and M. de Tréville, on receiving it, assured him that before two o'clock in the morning the four furloughs should be at the respective domiciles of the travellers.

"Have the goodness to send mine to Athos's residence," said D'Artagnan. "I should fear some disagreeable encounter if I were to go home."

"I will. Farewell! and a prosperous journey! By the way!" said M. de Tréville, calling him back.

D'Artagnan returned.

"Have you any money?"

D'Artagnan jingled the bag he had in his pocket.

"Enough?" asked M. de Treville.

"Three hundred pistoles."

"Excellent! That would carry you to the end of the world. Go, then."

D'Artagnan bowed to M. de Tréville, who held out his hand to him. D'Artagnan pressed it with a respect mixed with gratitude. Since his first arrival at Paris he had had constant occasion to honor this excellent man, whom he had always found worthy, loyal, and great.

His first visit was for Aramis, at whose house he had not been since the famous evening when he had followed Madame Bonacieux. What was more, he had seldom seen the young musketeer, but every time he had seen him, he thought he noticed a deep sadness imprinted on his countenance.

That evening also Aramis was sitting up, melancholy and thoughtful. D'Artagnan asked a few questions about this

deep melancholy. Aramis pleaded as his excuse a commentary upon the eighteenth chapter of St. Augustine that he was forced to write in Latin for the following week, and which preoccupied him a good deal.

After the two friends had been chatting a few moments, one of M. de Tréville's servants entered, bringing a sealed packet.

"What is that?" asked Aramis.

"The leave of absence you asked for," replied the lackey.

"For me! I have asked for no leave of absence!"

"Hold your tongue and take it," said D'Artagnan. "And you, my friend, there is a half-pistole for your trouble. You will tell M. de Tréville that M. Aramis is very much obliged to him. Go."

The lackey bowed to the ground and departed.

"What does all this mean?" asked Aramis.

"Pack up all you want for a fortnight's journey and follow me."

"But I cannot leave Paris just now, without knowing —" Aramis stopped.

"What has become of her, I suppose you mean," continued D'Artagnan.

"Become of whom?" replied Aramis.

"The woman who was here, the lady of the embroidered handkerchief."

"Who told you there was a woman here?" replied Aramis, becoming deathly pale.

"I saw her."

"And you know who she is?"

"Well, I think I can give a pretty good guess, at least."

"Listen," said Aramis; "since you know so many things, can you tell me what has become of that lady?"

"I presume that she has gone back to Tours."

"To Tours? Yes, that may be. You know her. But why did she return to Tours without telling me anything about it?"

"Because she was in fear of being arrested."

"Why did she not write to me then?"

"Because she was afraid of compromising you."

"D'Artagnan, you restore me to life," cried Aramis. "I fancied myself despised, betrayed. I was so delighted to see her again! I could not have believed she would risk her liberty for me, and yet for what other cause could she have returned to Paris?"

"For the cause which to-day carries us to England."

"And what is this cause?" demanded Aramis.

"Oh, you'll know it some day Aramis, but at present I must imitate the discretion of *the doctor's niece.*"

Aramis smiled as he remembered the tale he had related to his friends on a certain evening.

"Well, then, since she has left Paris, and you are sure of it, D'Artagnan, nothing prevents me, and I am ready to follow you. You say we are going — "

"To Athos's house now, and if you will come, I beg you to make haste, for we have already lost much time. By the way, inform Bazin."

"Will Bazin go with us?" asked Aramis.

"Perhaps so. At all events, it is best that he should follow us now to Athos's."

Aramis called Bazin, and after having ordered him to join them at Athos's residence: "Let us go, then," said he, taking his cloak, sword, and his three pistols, opening uselessly two or three drawers to see whether he could not find some stray coin or other.

When well assured this search was superfluous, he followed D'Artagnan, wondering how it happened that this young guardsman should know so well who the lady was to whom he had given hospitality, and that he should know better than he did what had become of her,

Only as they went out, Aramis placed his hand upon D'Artagnan's arm, and looking at him earnestly, —

"You have not spoken of this lady?" said he.

"To nobody in the world."

"Not even to Athos or Porthos?"

"I have not breathed a syllable to them."

"Good!"

And, at ease on this important point, Aramis continued his way with D'Artagnan, and both soon arrived at Athos's dwelling.

They found him holding his leave of absence in one hand, and M. de Tréville's note in the other.

"Can you explain to me what this leave of absence and this letter I have just received mean?" said the astonished Athos:

"My dear Athos: I wish, since your health absolutely requires it, that you should rest for a fortnight. Go, then, and take the waters of Forges, or any that may be more agreeable to you, and get well as quickly as possible.

"Tréville."

"Well, this leave of absence and this letter mean that you must follow me, Athos."

"To the waters of Forges?"

"There or elsewhere."

"In the king's service?"

"Either the king's or the queen's; are we not their Majesties' servants?"

At that moment Porthos entered.

"Zounds!" said he; "here is a queer thing! Since when, I wonder, in the musketeers, did they grant men leave of absence without its being asked?"

"Since the time," said D'Artagnan, "they have had friends who ask it for them."

"Ah ha!" said Porthos; "it appears there's something fresh afoot?"

"Yes, we are going —" said Aramis.

"Going! To what country?" demanded Porthos.

"'Pon my word, I don't know much about it," said Athos. "Ask D'Artagnan here."

"To London, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan.

"To London!" cried Porthos; "and what the devil are we going to do in London?"

"That is what I am not at liberty to tell you, gentlemen. You must trust to me."

"But in order to go to London, a man should have some money; and I have none."

"Nor I," said Aramis.

"Nor I," said Porthos.

"Well, I have," added D'Artagnan, pulling out his treasure from his pocket, and placing it on the table. There are in this bag three hundred pistoles. Let each take seventy-five, which will be quite enough to carry us to London and back. Besides, we may be sure that all of us will not reach London."

"Why so?"

"Because, according to all probability, some of us will be left on the road."

"What is this, then, — a campaign upon which we are entering?"

"And a most dangerous one. I give you fair notice."

"Ah! ah! but since we run the risk of being killed," said Porthos, "at least I should like to know what for."

"Great good that will do you!" said Athos.

"And yet," said Aramis, "I am somewhat of Porthos's opinion."

"Is the king accustomed to give you reasons? No. He says to you, very simply: 'Gentlemen, there is fighting going

on in Gascony or in Flanders; go and fight;' and you go. Why? You don't even consider why."

"D'Artagnan is right," said Athos; "here are our three leaves of absence, which came from M. de Tréville. And here are three hundred pistoles, which came from I don't know where. So let us go and get killed where we are told to go. Is life worth the trouble of so many questions? D'Artagnan, I am ready to follow you."

"And I," said Porthos.

"And I, also," said Aramis. "And, indeed, I am not sorry to quit Paris. I need distractions."

"Well, you will have distractions enough, gentlemen, be assured," said D'Artagnan.

"And, now, when are we to go?" asked Athos.

"Immediately," replied D'Artagnan; "we have not a minute to lose."

"Hello! Grimaud, Planchet, Mousqueton, Bazin!" cried the four young men, calling their lackeys, "clean my boots, and fetch the horses from the hôtel."

Each musketeer, in fact, was accustomed to leave at the central establishment, as at a barracks, his own horse and his lackeys.

Planchet, Grimaud, Mousqueton, and Bazin set off at full speed.

"Now let us draw up the plan of campaign," said Porthos. "Where do we go first?"

"To Calais," said D'Artagnan. "That is the straightest way to London."

"Well," said Porthos, "my advice is this —"

"Speak — what is it?"

"Four men travelling together would be suspicious. D'Artagnan will give each of us his instructions. I will set out first by the Boulogne road, to scout out the way. Athos will set out two hours later, by that of Amiens. Aramis will follow us by that of Noyon. As to D'Artagnan, he will go by what road he thinks best, in Planchet's clothes, while Planchet will follow us, dressed like D'Artagnan, in the uniform of the guards."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "my opinion is that it is not proper to allow lackeys to have anything to do in such an affair. A secret may, by chance, be betrayed by gentlemen, but it is almost always sold by lackeys."

"Porthos's plan appears to me to be impracticable," said D'Artagnan, "inasmuch as I am myself ignorant of what

instructions I can give you. I am the bearer of a letter, that is all. I have not, and I cannot make, three copies of that letter, because it is sealed. We must then, as it appears to me, travel in company. This letter is here, in this pocket," and he pointed to the pocket which contained the letter. "If I should be killed, one of you must take it and pursue the route. If he is killed, it will be another's turn, and so on. Provided a single one arrives, that is all that is necessary."

"Bravo, D'Artagnan! your opinion is mine," cried Athos. "Besides, we must be consistent. I am going to take the waters; you will accompany me. Instead of taking the waters of Forges, I go and take sea-baths. I am free to do so. If any one wishes to stop us, I will show M. de Tréville's letter, and you will show your leaves of absence. If we are attacked, we will defend ourselves. If we are examined, we will stoutly maintain that we were only anxious to dip ourselves a certain number of times in the sea. They would have an easy time with four isolated men, whereas four men together make a troop. We will arm our four lackeys with pistols and carbines. If they send an army out against us, we will give battle, and the survivor, as D'Artagnan says, will carry the letter."

"Well said," cried Aramis; "you don't often speak, Athos, but when you do speak, it is like Saint John of the Golden Mouth. I agree to Athos's plan. And you, Porthos?"

"I agree to it, too," said Porthos, "if D'Artagnan approves of it. D'Artagnan, being bearer of the letter, is naturally the head of the enterprise. Let him decide, and we will execute."

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "I decide that we adopt Athos's plan, and that we set off in half an hour."

"Agreed!" shouted the three musketeers in chorus.

And each one, putting his hand in the bag, took his seventy-five pistoles, and made his preparations to start at the time appointed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE JOURNEY.

At two o'clock in the morning, our four adventurers left Paris by the gate St. Denis. As long as it was night they remained silent. In spite of themselves they felt the influence of the darkness, and saw ambushes everywhere.

With the first rays of the sun their tongues became loosened,

with day their gayety revived. It was like the eve of a battle: the heart beat, the eyes laughed, and they felt that the life they were perhaps going to lose was, after all, a pleasant thing.

The appearance of the caravan was indeed most formidable. The black horses of the musketeers, their martial carriage, the squadron-like step of these noble companions of the soldier, would have betrayed the strictest incognito.

The lackeys followed, armed to the teeth.

All went well as far as Chantilly, where they arrived about eight o'clock in the morning. They needed breakfast, and alighted at the door of an inn recommended by a sign representing St. Martin giving half his cloak to a poor man. They ordered the lackeys not to unsaddle the horses, and to hold themselves in readiness to set off again immediately.

They entered the public room and seated themselves at table. A gentleman, who had just arrived by the route of Dammartin, was seated at the same table, and was taking his breakfast. He opened the conversation by talking of the rain and the fine weather. The travellers replied, he drank to their good health, and the travellers returned his politeness.

But at the moment Mousqueton came to announce that the horses were ready, and they were rising from the table, the stranger proposed to Porthos to drink the cardinal's health. Porthos replied that he asked no better, if the stranger in his turn would drink the king's health. The stranger cried that he acknowledged no other king but his Eminence. Porthos told him he was drunk, and the stranger drew his sword.

"You have committed a piece of folly," said Athos, "but it can't be helped. There is no drawing back. Kill your man, and rejoin us as soon as you can."

And all three mounted their horses and set out at a good pace, while Porthos was promising his adversary to perforate him with all the thrusts known in the fencing schools.

"There goes one!" cried Athos, at the end of five hundred paces.

"But why did that man attack Porthos, rather than any other of us?" asked Aramis.

"Because Porthos was talking louder than the rest, and he took him for the leader of the party," said D'Artagnan.

"I always said that this cadet from Gascony was a well of wisdom," murmured Athos.

And the travellers continued their route.

At Beauvais they stopped two hours, as much to breathe

their horses a little as to wait for Porthos. At the end of the two hours, as Porthos did not come and they heard no news of him, they resumed their journey.

At a league from Beauvais, where the road was confined between two high banks, they fell in with eight or ten men who, taking advantage of the road being unpaved in this spot, appeared to be employed in digging holes and making muddy ruts.

Aramis, not liking to soil his boots with this artificial mortar, apostrophized them rather sharply. Athos wished to restrain him, but it was too late. The laborers began to jeer the travellers, and by their insolence disturbed the equanimity even of the cool Athos, who urged on his horse against one of them.

The men all immediately drew back to the ditch, from which each took a concealed musket. The result was that our seven travellers were outnumbered in weapons. Aramis received a ball which passed through his shoulder, and Mousqueton another ball which lodged in the fleshy parts at the lower portion of the back. Mousqueton alone fell from his horse, not because he was severely wounded, but from not being able to see the wound, he deemed it to be more serious than it really was.

"It is an ambuscade!" shouted D'Artagnan; "don't waste a shot! forward!"

Aramis, wounded as he was, seized the mane of his horse, which carried him on with the others. Mousqueton's horse rejoined them, and galloped by the side of his companions.

"That horse will serve us for a relay," said Athos.

"I would rather have had a hat," said D'Artagnan; "mine was carried away by a ball. By my faith, it is very fortunate that the letter was not in it."

"Well, but they'll kill poor Porthos when he comes up," said Aramis.

"If Porthos were on his legs, he would have rejoined us by this time," said Athos. "My opinion is, that when they came to the point the drunken man proved to be sober enough."

They continued at their best speed for two hours, although the horses were so fatigued that it was to be feared they would soon refuse service.

The travellers had chosen cross-roads, in the hope that they might meet with less interruption. But at Crèvecœur Aramis declared he could proceed no farther. In fact, it required all the courage which he concealed beneath his elegant form

and polished manners to bear him so far. He grew paler every minute, and they were obliged to support him on his horse. They lifted him off at the door of an inn, left Bazin with him, who besides, in a skirmish, was more embarrassing than useful, and set forward again in the hope of sleeping at Amiens."

"'S death!" said Athos, as soon as they were again in motion, "reduced to two masters and Grimaud and Planchet! 'S death I won't be their dupe, I will answer for it; I will neither open my mouth nor draw my sword between here and Calais. I swear by —"

"Let us waste no time in swearing," said D'Artagnan, "let us gallop, if our horses are willing."

And the travellers buried their rowels in their horses' flanks, who, thus vigorously stimulated, recovered their energies. They arrived at Amiens at midnight, and alighted at the inn of the Golden Lily.

The host had the appearance of as honest a man as any on earth. He received the travellers with his candlestick in one hand and his cotton night-cap in the other. He proposed to lodge the two travellers each in a charming chamber, but, unfortunately, these charming chambers were at the opposite extremities of the hotel, and D'Artagnan and Athos declined them. The host replied that he had no other worthy of their Excellencies, but the travellers declared they would sleep in the common chamber, each upon a mattress, which could be thrown upon the floor. The host insisted, but the travellers were firm, and he was obliged to comply with their wishes.

They had just prepared their beds and barricaded their door within, when some one in the courtyard knocked at the shutter. They demanded who was there, and, upon recognizing the voices of their lackeys, opened the shutter.

In fact, it was Planchet and Grimaud.

"Grimaud can take care of the horses," said Planchet; "if you are willing, gentlemen, I will sleep across your doorway, and you will then be certain that nobody can come to you."

"And what will you sleep upon?" said D'Artagnan.

"Here is my bed," replied Planchet, producing a bundle of straw.

"Come, then," said D'Artagnan; "you are right. Mine host's face does not please me at all — it is too civil by half."

"Nor me either," said Athos.

Planchet got in through the window, and installed himself across the doorway, while Grimaud went and shut himself up

in the stable, undertaking that, by five o'clock in the morning, he and the four horses should be ready.

The night passed off quietly enough. About two o'clock in the morning, to be sure, somebody endeavored to open the door. But as Planchet awoke in an instant, and cried, "Who is there?" this person replied he was mistaken, and went away.

At four o'clock in the morning, a terrible noise was heard in the stables. Grimaud had tried to waken the stable-boys, and the stable-boys were beating him. When the window was opened the poor lad was seen lying senseless, with his head split by a blow with a fork-handle.

Planchet went down into the yard, and proceeded to saddle the horses. But the horses were all used up. Mousqueton's horse, which had travelled for five or six hours without a rider the day before, alone might have been able to pursue the journey. But, by an inconceivable error, a veterinary surgeon, who had been sent for, as it appeared, to bleed one of the host's horses, had bled Mousqueton's.

This began to be annoying. All these successive accidents were, perhaps, the result of chance, but they might, quite as probably, be the fruits of a plot. Athos and D'Artagnan went out, while Planchet was sent to inquire if there were not three horses for sale in the neighborhood. At the door stood two horses, fresh, strong, and fully equipped. These were just what they wanted. He asked where their owners were, and was informed that they had passed the night in the inn, and were then settling with the master.

Athos went down to pay the reckoning, while D'Artagnan and Planchet stood at the street-door. The host was in a low room at the back, to which Athos was requested to go.

Athos entered without the least mistrust, and took out two pistoles to pay the bill. The host was alone, seated before his desk, one of the drawers of which was partly open. He took the money which Athos offered to him, and, after turning and turning it over and over in his hands, suddenly cried out that it was bad, and that he would have him and his companions arrested as counterfeiters.

"You scoundrel!" cried Athos, stepping towards him, "I'll cut your ears off!"

But the host stooped, took two pistols from the half-open drawer, pointed them at Athos, and called out for help.

At the same instant four men, armed to the teeth, entered by side doors, and rushed upon Athos.

"I am taken!" shouted Athos with all the power of his lungs; "Go on, D'Artagnan! spur, spur!" and he fired two pistols.

D'Artagnan and Planchet did not require twice bidding. They unfastened the two horses that were waiting at the door, leaped upon them, buried their spurs in their sides, and set off at full gallop.

"Do you know what has become of Athos?" asked D'Artagnan of Planchet, as they galloped on.

"Ah, sir," said Planchet, "I saw one fall at each of his shots, and he appeared to me, through the glass door, to be fencing with the others."

"Brave Athos!" murmured D'Artagnan; "and to think that we must leave him, while the same fate awaits us, perhaps, two paces hence! Forward, Planchet, forward! You are a brave fellow!"

"Did not I tell you, sir," replied Planchet, "that we Picards are found out by being used? Besides, I am in my own country here, and that puts me on my mettle!"

And both, with free use of the spur, arrived at St. Omer without drawing bridle. At St. Omer they breathed their horses with their bridles passed under their arms, for fear of accident, and ate a hasty morsel standing in the road, after which they departed again.

At a hundred paces from the gates of Calais, D'Artagnan's horse sank under him, and could not by any means be made to get up again, the blood flowing from both his eyes and his nose. There still remained Planchet's horse, but he had stopped short, and could not be started again.

Fortunately, as we have said, they were within a hundred paces of the city. They left their two horses upon the highway, and ran toward the port. Planchet called his master's attention to a gentleman who had just arrived with his lackey, and who was about fifty paces ahead of them.

They made all haste to come up to this gentleman, who appeared to be in a great hurry. His boots were covered with dust, and he was asking whether he could not instantly cross over to England.

"Nothing would be more easy," said the captain of a vessel ready to set sail; "but this morning an order arrived that no one should be allowed to cross without express permission from the cardinal."

"I have that permission," said the gentleman, drawing a paper from his pocket; "here it is."

"Have it signed by the governor of the port," said the captain, "and give me the preference."

"Where shall I find the governor?"

"At his country-house."

"Where is that situated?"

"A quarter of a league from the city. Look, you may see it from here — at the foot of that little hill, that slated roof."

"Very well," said the gentleman.

And, with his lackey, he started for the governor's country-house.

D'Artagnan and Planchet followed the gentleman at a distance of five hundred paces.

Once outside the city, D'Artagnan quickly overtook the gentleman, as he was entering a little wood.

"Sir," said D'Artagnan, "you appear to be in great haste?"

"No one can be more so, sir."

"I am sorry for that," said D'Artagnan; "for, as I am in great haste likewise, I was going to beg you to do me a service."

"What service?"

"To let me go first."

"Impossible," said the gentleman. "I have travelled sixty leagues in forty-four hours, and by to-morrow at mid-day I must be in London."

"I have performed the same distance in forty hours, and by to-morrow at ten o'clock in the morning I must be in London."

"Very sorry, sir; but I was here first, and will not go second."

"I am sorry, too, sir; but I arrived second and will go first."

"The king's service!" said the gentleman.

"My own service!" said D'Artagnan.

"But this is a needless quarrel you are seeking with me, as I think."

"Zounds! what can you expect it to be?"

"What do you want?"

"Would you like to know?"

"Certainly."

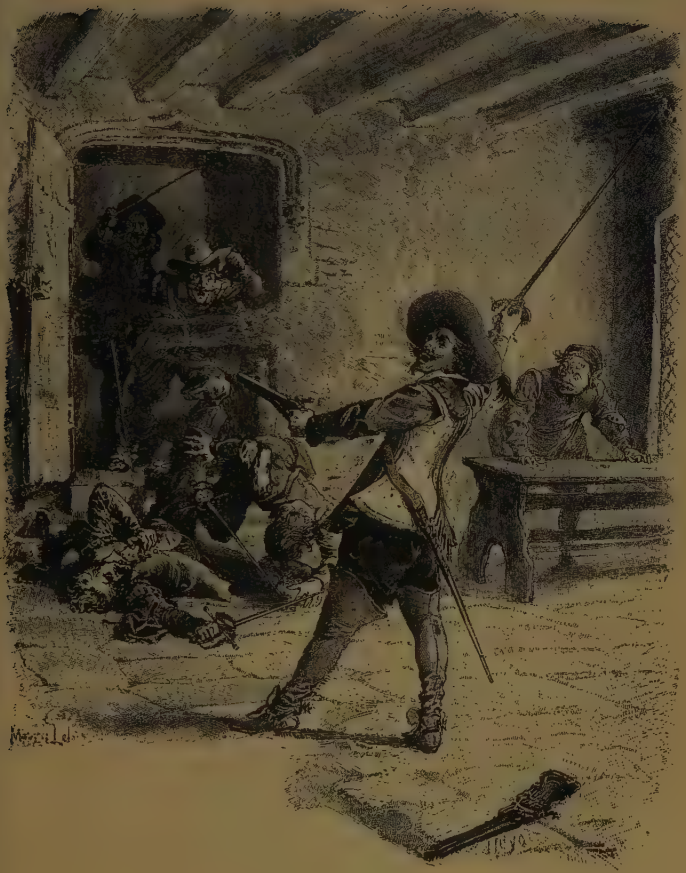
"Well, then, I want that order of which you are the bearer, seeing that I have none and must have one."

"You are joking, I presume."

"I never joke."

"Let me pass!"

"You shall not pass."



"Go on, D'Artagnan, Spur, Spur!" —p. 189.

"My brave young man, I will blow out your brains. Halloo, Lubin! my pistols!"

"Planchet," called out D'Artagnan, "take care of the lackey. I will manage the master."

Planchet, emboldened by his first exploit, sprang upon Lubin, and, being strong and vigorous, he soon got him on his back, and placed his knee on his chest.

"Go on with your affair, sir," cried Planchet; "I have finished mine."

Seeing this, the gentleman drew his sword, and sprang upon D'Artagnan; but he had to deal with a tough customer.

In three seconds D'Artagnan had wounded him three times, exclaiming at each thrust:

"One for Athos! one for Porthos! and one for Aramis!"

At the third thrust the gentleman fell like a log.

D'Artagnan believed him to be dead, or at least insensible, and went toward him for the purpose of taking the order. But at the moment he stretched out his hand to search for it, the wounded man, who had not dropped his sword, pricked him in the breast, crying:

"And one for you!"

"And one for me! the best for the last!" cried D'Artagnan, in a rage, nailing him to the earth with a fourth thrust through his body.

This time the gentleman closed his eyes and fainted. D'Artagnan searched his pockets, and took from one of them the order for the passage. It was in the name of the Comte de Wardes.

Then, casting a glance on the handsome young man, who was scarcely twenty-five years of age, and whom he was leaving lying there unconscious and perhaps dead, he uttered a sigh over that unaccountable destiny which leads men to destroy one another for the interests of people who are strangers to them, and who often do not even know of their existence.

But he was soon roused from these reflections by Lubin, who uttered loud cries, and screamed for help with all his might.

Planchet grasped him by the throat, and pressed as hard as he could.

"Sir," said he, "as long as I hold him in this manner, he can't cry, I'll be bound. But as soon as I let go, he will howl again as loud as ever. I have found out that he's a Norman, and Normans are obstinate."

In fact, tightly held as he was, Lubin endeavored still to make a noise.

"Wait!" said D'Artagnan, and, taking out his handkerchief, he gagged him.

"Now," said Planchet, "let us bind him to a tree."

This being properly done, they drew the Comte de Wardes close to his servant; and as night was approaching, and as the wounded man and the bound man were both at some little distance within the wood, it was evident they would remain there till the next day.

"And now," said D'Artagnan, "to the governor's house."

"But you appear to me to be wounded," said Planchet.

"Oh, that's nothing! Let us despatch what is most pressing first, and we will attend to my wound afterwards; besides, it does not seem a very dangerous one."

And they both set forward as fast as they could towards the worthy functionary's country-seat.

The Comte de Wardes was announced.

D'Artagnan was introduced.

"You have an order signed by the cardinal?"

"Yes, sir," replied D'Artagnan; "here it is."

"Ah, ah! it is quite regular and explicit," said the governor.

"Most likely," said D'Artagnan; "I am one of his most faithful servants."

"It appears that his Eminence is anxious to prevent some one from reaching England?"

"Yes; a certain D'Artagnan, a Béarnese gentleman, who left Paris in company with three friends of his, with the intention of going to London."

"Do you know him personally?" asked the governor.

"Whom?"

"This D'Artagnan."

"Oh, yes, perfectly well."

"Describe him to me, then."

"Nothing more easy."

And D'Artagnan gave, feature for feature, a description of the Comte de Wardes.

"Has he any one with him?"

"Yes, a lackey named Lubin."

"We will keep a sharp lookout for them. And if we lay hands upon them, his Eminence may be assured they shall be sent back to Paris under a good escort."

"And by doing so, governor," said D'Artagnan, "you will have merited well of the cardinal."

"Shall you see him on your return, count?"

"Doubtless I shall."

"Tell him, I beg you, that I am his humble servant."

"I will not fail."

And, delighted with this assurance, the governor signed the passport and delivered it to D'Artagnan, who lost no time in useless compliments, but thanked the governor, bowed, and departed.

Once out, he and Planchet set off as fast as they could, and, by making a *détour*, avoided the wood, and reëntered the city by another gate.

The vessel was quite ready to sail, and the captain waiting on the wharf.

"Well?" said he, on perceiving D'Artagnan.

"Here is my pass, signed," said the latter.

"And that other gentleman?"

"He will not go to-day," said D'Artagnan; "but here, I'll pay you for us two."

"In that case we will be gone," said the captain.

"Yes; as soon as you please," replied D'Artagnan.

He leaped, with Planchet, into the boat. Five minutes after they were on board. And it was time; for they had sailed scarcely half a league when D'Artagnan saw a flash and heard a report — it was the cannon which announced the closing of the harbor.

It was time to look to his wound. Fortunately, as D'Artagnan had thought, it was not very dangerous. The point of the sword had met with a rib, and glanced along the bone. Besides, his shirt had stuck to the wound at once, and he had lost but very little blood.

D'Artagnan was worn out with fatigue. A mattress was laid upon the deck for him; he threw himself upon it, and fell fast asleep.

At break of day they were still three or four leagues from the coast of England. The breeze had been light during the night, and they had made but little progress.

At ten o'clock the vessel cast anchor in the harbor of Dover, and at half-past ten D'Artagnan placed his foot on English soil, crying:

"Here I am at last!"

But that was not all: they had to get to London. In England the post was quite well served. D'Artagnan and Planchet took post-horses, a postilion rode before them, and in four hours they were at the gates of the capital.

D'Artagnan did not know London, he did not know one word of English, but he wrote the name of Buckingham on a piece of paper, and every one to whom he showed it pointed out to him the way to the duke's palace.

The duke was at Windsor hunting with the king.

D'Artagnan inquired for the duke's confidential valet, who, having accompanied him in all his travels, spoke French perfectly well. He told him that he came from Paris, on an affair of life and death, and that he must speak with his master instantly.

The confidence with which D'Artagnan spoke convinced Patrick, which was the name of the minister's minister. He ordered two horses to be saddled, and himself went as the young guardsman's guide. As for Planchet, he had been lifted from his horse as stiff as a stake. The poor lad's strength was exhausted. D'Artagnan seemed to be made of iron.

On their arrival at the castle they inquired for the duke, and learned that he was hawking with the king in the marshes, two or three leagues away.

In twenty minutes they were at the place designated. Patrick soon caught the sound of his master's voice recalling his falcon.

"Whom shall I announce to my Lord Duke?" asked Patrick.

"The young man who one evening sought a quarrel with him on the Pont Neuf, opposite the Samaritaine."

"Rather a singular introduction?"

"You will find that it is as good as any other."

Patrick galloped off, reached the duke, and announced to him in these very words that a messenger awaited him.

Buckingham at once remembered the circumstance, and suspecting that something was going on in France, concerning which news was now brought to him, he took only the time to inquire where the messenger was, and, recognizing at a distance the uniform of the guards, he put his horse into a gallop, and rode straight up to D'Artagnan. Patrick discreetly kept in the background.

"Has any misfortune happened to the queen?" cried Buckingham, throwing all his fear and love into the question.

"I believe not. Nevertheless, I believe she is in some great peril from which your Grace alone can extricate her."

"I!" cried Buckingham. "What is it? I should be but too happy to render her any service! Speak! speak!"

"Take this letter," said D'Artagnan.

"This letter! From whom does this letter come?"

"From her Majesty, as I think."

"From her Majesty!" said Buckingham, becoming so pale that D'Artagnan feared he was going to be ill — and he broke the seal.

"What is this rent?" said he, showing D'Artagnan a place where it had been pierced through.

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I did not notice that; it must have been the Comte de Wardes's sword made that fine thrust, when he ran it into my breast."

"Are you wounded?" asked Buckingham, as he opened the letter.

"Oh! nothing," said D'Artagnan; "only a scratch."

"Just heavens! what have I read!" cried the duke. "Patrick, remain here, or rather join the king, wherever he may be, and tell his Majesty that I humbly beg him to excuse me, but an affair of the greatest importance calls me to London. Come, sir, come!" and both set off toward the capital at full gallop.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COMTESSE DE WINTER.

As they rode along the duke learned from D'Artagnan, not all that had passed, but all that D'Artagnan himself knew. By adding what he got from the young man to his own recollections, he was enabled to form a pretty exact idea of a condition of things, the seriousness of which the queen's letter, short and vague as it was, conveyed to him quite clearly. But what astonished him most was, that the cardinal, deeply interested as he was in preventing this young man from setting foot in England, had not succeeded in stopping him on the road. D'Artagnan, then, on the expression of this astonishment, told him the precautions taken, and how, thanks to the devotion of his three friends, whom he had left dispersed and bleeding on the way, he had succeeded in getting off with the sword-thrust, which had pierced the queen's letter, and for which he had repaid M. de Wardes in such terrible coin. While he was listening to this account, which was delivered with the greatest simplicity, the duke looked from time to time at the young man with astonishment, as if he could not comprehend how so

much prudence, courage, and devotion could be displayed by a youth evidently not yet twenty years of age.

The horses went like the wind, and in a few moments they were at the gates of London. D'Artagnan imagined that on arriving in the city the duke would slacken his pace, but it was not so. He kept on at breakneck speed, heedless though he upset those who were in his way. In fact, in crossing the city two or three accidents of this kind happened. But Buckingham did not even turn his head to see what became of those he had knocked down. D'Artagnan followed him amidst cries which very much resembled curses.

On entering the court of his palace Buckingham sprang from his horse, and, without caring what would become of him, threw the bridle on his neck and sprang toward the staircase. D'Artagnan did the same, with a little more concern, however, for the noble animals whose merits he could fully appreciate; but he had the satisfaction of seeing three or four grooms run from the kitchens and stables and take charge of them at once.

The duke walked so fast that D'Artagnan had some trouble in keeping up with him. He passed through several apartments furnished with an elegance of which the greatest nobles of France had not even an idea, and arrived at length in a bedchamber which was at once a miracle of taste and of splendor. In the alcove of this chamber was a door, made in the tapestry, which the duke opened with a small gold key suspended from his neck by a chain of the same metal. D'Artagnan remained discreetly behind. But Buckingham, at the moment that he passed through the door, turned round, and seeing the young man's hesitation —

"Come in! come in!" cried he, "and if you have the good fortune to be admitted to her Majesty's presence, tell her what you have seen."

Encouraged by this invitation, D'Artagnan followed the duke, who closed the door after him.

They then found themselves in a small chapel hung with a tapestry of Persian silk and embossed with gold, and brilliantly lit with a vast number of wax candles. Over a kind of altar, and beneath a canopy of blue velvet, surmounted by white and red plumes, was a life-size portrait of Anne of Austria, such a perfect likeness that D'Artagnan uttered a cry of surprise on beholding it. You might believe that the queen was about to speak.

On the altar, and beneath the portrait, was the casket containing the diamond studs.

The duke approached the altar, fell on his knees as a priest might have done before a crucifix, then opened the casket.

"Here," said he, drawing from the casket a large bow of blue ribbon all sparkling with diamonds, "here," said he, "are the precious studs which I have taken an oath should be buried with me. The queen gave them to me, the queen takes them from me. Her will, like that of God, be done in all things."

Then he began to kiss, one after the other, those studs with which he was about to part. All at once he uttered a terrible cry.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed D'Artagnan anxiously, "what has happened to you, milord?"

"All is lost! all is lost!" cried Buckingham, turning as pale as death; "two of the studs are missing! there are but ten of them left!"

"Can you have lost them, milord, or do you think they have been stolen?"

"They have been stolen!" replied the duke, "and it is the cardinal who has dealt me this blow. See, the ribbons which held them have been cut with scissors."

"If milord suspects they have been stolen — perhaps the person who stole them still has them."

"Let me reflect," said the duke. "The only time I wore these studs was at a ball given by the king a week ago at Windsor. The Comtesse de Winter, with whom I had had a quarrel, became reconciled to me at that ball. That reconciliation was a jealous woman's vengeance. I have never seen her since. The woman is an agent of the cardinal's."

"Why, then, he has agents throughout the whole world!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Yes, yes," said Buckingham, gnashing his teeth with rage, "he is a terrible antagonist! But when is the ball to take place?"

"Next Monday."

"Next Monday! Five days yet; that's more time than we need. Patrick!" cried the duke, opening the door of the chapel, "Patrick!"

His confidential valet appeared.

"My jeweller and my secretary."

The valet went out with a mute promptness and silence that showed he was accustomed to obey blindly and without reply.

But, although the jeweller had been summoned first, it was the secretary who first made his appearance. This was simple enough. He lived in the palace. He found Buckingham seated at a table in his bed-chamber, writing orders with his own hand.

"Master Jackson," said he, "go instantly to the lord chancellor and tell him that I desire him to execute these orders. I wish them to be promulgated immediately."

"But, your Grace, if the lord chancellor questions me about the motives which may have led your Grace to adopt such an extraordinary measure, what reply shall I make?"

"That such is my pleasure, and that I am responsible for my wishes to no man."

"Will that be the answer," replied the secretary, smiling, "which he must transmit to his Majesty, if, by chance, his Majesty should have the curiosity to know why no vessel is to leave any of the ports of Great Britain?"

"You are right, Master Jackson," replied Buckingham. "He will say, in that case, to the king, that I am determined on war, and that this measure is my first act of hostility against France."

The secretary bowed and retired.

"We are safe on that side," said Buckingham, turning toward D'Artagnan. "If the studs are not yet gone to Paris, they will not arrive till after you."

"How so, milord?"

"I have just placed an embargo on all vessels at present in his Majesty's ports, and, without special permission, not one will dare raise an anchor."

D'Artagnan looked with stupefaction at a man who thus employed in the service of his amours the unlimited power with which he was clothed by a king's confidence. Buckingham saw by the expression of the young man's face what was passing in his mind, and he smiled.

"Yes," said he, "yes, Anne of Austria is my true queen; upon a word from her, I would betray my country, I would betray my king, — I would betray my God. She asked me not to send the Protestants of Rochelle the assistance I promised them, and I did not do it. I broke my word, it is true; but never mind — I obeyed her wish. Have I not been richly paid for that obedience? It was to that obedience I owe her portrait!"

D'Artagnan was astonished to see by what fragile and unknown threads the destinies of a nation and the lives of men are sometimes suspended.

He was lost in these reflections when the goldsmith entered. He was an Irishman, one of the most skilful of his craft, and who himself confessed that he gained a hundred thousand pounds a year by the Duke of Buckingham.

"Master O'Reilly," said the duke to him, leading him into the chapel, "look at these diamond studs, and tell me what they are worth apiece."

The goldsmith cast a glance at the elegant manner in which they were set, calculated, one with another, what the diamonds were worth, and without hesitation —

"Fifteen hundred pistoles each, your Grace," replied he.

"How many days would it require to make two studs exactly like them? You see there are two wanting."

"A week, your Grace."

"I will give you three thousand pistoles each, if I can have them by the day after to-morrow."

"Your Grace, you shall have them."

"You are a jewel of a man, Master O'Reilly. But that is not all. These studs cannot be trusted to anybody. They must be made in this palace."

"Impossible, your Grace; there is no one but myself who can make them so that the new may not be distinguished from the old."

"Therefore, my dear master O'Reilly, you are my prisoner; and should you wish to leave my palace now, you cannot; so make the best of it. Name to me such of your workmen as you stand in need of, and point out the tools they must bring."

The goldsmith knew the duke; he knew all remarks would be useless, and instantly made up his mind.

"May I be permitted to inform my wife?" said he.

"Oh! you may even see her if you like, my dear master O'Reilly. Your captivity shall be mild, be assured; and as every inconvenience deserves its indemnification, here is, in addition to the price of the studs, an order for a thousand pistoles, to make you forget the annoyance I cause you."

D'Artagnan could not get over the surprise created in him by this minister, who thus open-handed sported with men and millions.

As to the goldsmith, he wrote to his wife, sending her the order for the thousand pistoles, and charging her to send him in exchange his most skilful apprentice, an assortment of diamonds, of which he gave the names and the weight, and the necessary tools.

Buckingham led the goldsmith to the chamber destined for him, which, at the end of half an hour, was transformed into a workshop. Then he placed a sentinel at each door, with an order to admit nobody, upon any pretence, but his valet, Patrick. We need not add that the goldsmith, O'Reilly, and his assistant, were prohibited from going out on any account.

This point settled, the duke turned to D'Artagnan.

"Now, my young friend," said he, "England is all our own. What do you wish for? What do you desire?"

"A bed," replied D'Artagnan. "I confess that is at present the thing I stand most in need of."

Buckingham assigned D'Artagnan a chamber adjoining his own. He wished to have the young man at hand, not at all that he mistrusted him, but for the sake of having some one to whom he could constantly talk about the queen.

An hour later the ordinance was published in London that no vessel bound for France should leave the ports — not even the packet-boat with letters. In the eyes of everybody this was a declaration of war between the two kingdoms.

On the day after the next, by eleven o'clock, the two diamond studs were finished, and they were such exact imitations, so perfectly like the others, that Buckingham could not tell the new ones from the old ones, and the most practised in such matters would have been deceived as he was.

He immediately called D'Artagnan.

"Here," said he to him, "are the diamond studs that you came to fetch; and be my witness that I have done all that human power could do."

"Rest assured, milord. I will tell what I have seen. But does your Grace mean to give me the studs without the casket?"

"The casket would only encumber you. Besides, the casket is the more precious from being all that is left to me. You will say that I keep it."

"I will perform your commission word for word, milord."

"And now," resumed Buckingham, looking earnestly at the young man, "how shall I ever acquit myself towards you?"

D'Artagnan colored up to the eyes. He saw that the duke was searching for a means of making him accept something, and the idea that the blood of himself and his friends was about to be paid for with English gold was strangely repugnant to him.

"Let us understand each other, milord," replied D'Artagnan, "and let us weigh things well beforehand, in order that

there may be no mistake. I am in the service of the king and queen of France, and form part of the company of M. des Essarts's guards, who, as well as his brother-in-law, M. de Tréville, is particularly attached to their Majesties. And, besides, it is very probable I should not have done anything of all this if it had not been to make myself agreeable to some one who is my lady, as the queen is yours."

"I understand," said the duke, smiling, "and I even believe that I know that other person; it is —"

"Milord! I have not named her!" interrupted the young man, quickly.

"That is true," said the duke; "it is, then, to this person I am bound to discharge my debt of gratitude for your service."

"You have said it, milord; for truly, at this moment, when there is question of war, I confess to you that I see in your Grace only an Englishman, and, consequently, an enemy, whom I should have much greater pleasure in meeting on the field of battle than in the park at Windsor or the corridors of the Louvre. All which, however, will not prevent me from executing my commission in every point, or from laying down my life, if there be need of it, to accomplish it; but — I repeat it to your Grace — without your having personally, on that account, more to thank me for in this second interview than for what I did for you in the first."

"We say, 'Proud as a Scotchman,'" murmured the Duke of Buckingham.

"And we say, 'Proud as a Gascon,'" replied D'Artagnan. "The Gascons are the Scots of France."

D'Artagnan bowed to the duke, and was retiring.

"Well! you are going away in that manner? But where? and how?"

"That's true!"

"Damn me! these Frenchmen have no forethought!"

"I had forgotten that England is an island, and that you are the king of it."

"Go to the port, ask for the brig 'Le Sund,' and give this letter to the captain; he will convey you to a little port where certainly no one is on the watch for you, and where only fishing-smacks ordinarily run in."

"What is the name of that port?"

"Saint-Valery; but listen. When you have arrived there, you will go to a mean inn, without a name and without a sign, a mere sailor's lodging-house. You cannot be mistaken, there is but one."

"And then?"

"You will ask for the host, and will repeat to him the word —*Forward!*"

"Which means?"

"*En avant;* that is the password. He will give you a horse all saddled, and will point out to you the road you are to take. You will find, in this manner, four relays on your route. If you wish, at each of these relays, to give your Paris address, the four horses will follow you there. You already know two of them, and you appeared to appreciate them like a lover of horseflesh. They were those we rode, and you may rely upon me for the others not being inferior to them. These horses are equipped for the field. However proud you may be, you will not refuse to accept one of them, and to request your three companions to accept the others. That is making war against us, besides. The end excuses the means, as you Frenchmen say, does it not?"

"Yes, milord, I accept them," said D'Artagnan, "and if it please God, we will make good use of your gifts."

"Well, now, your hand, young man; perhaps we shall soon meet on the battle-field; but, in the meantime, we shall part good friends, I hope?"

"Yes, milord; but with the hope of soon becoming enemies?"

"Be satisfied on that head. I promise you."

"I depend upon your word, milord."

D'Artagnan bowed to the duke, and quickly made his way to the port opposite the Tower of London. He found the vessel that had been named to him, delivered his letter to the captain, who, after having it signed by the warden of the port, set sail at once.

Fifty vessels were waiting ready to sail.

As he was passing alongside of one of them, D'Artagnan fancied he perceived on board the lady of Meung, the same whom the unknown gentleman had styled milady, and whom D'Artagnan had thought so handsome. But, thanks to the current of the river and a fair wind, his vessel passed so quickly that he lost sight of her in a moment.

The next day, about five o'clock in the morning, he landed at St. Valery.

D'Artagnan went instantly in search of the inn, and easily recognized it by the shouts proceeding from it. War between England and France was talked of as near and assured, and some jolly sailors were carousing over it.

D'Artagnan made his way through the crowd, advanced toward the host, and pronounced the word, "*Forward!*" The host instantly made him a sign to follow him, went out with him through a door which opened into the yard, led him to the stable, where a horse all saddled was waiting for him, and asked him if he needed anything else.

"I want to know the route I am to follow," said D'Artagnan.

"Go from here to Blangy, and from Blangy to Neufchâtel. At Neufchâtel, go to the inn of the 'Golden Harrow,' give the password to the landlord, and you will find, as you found here, a horse ready saddled."

"Have I anything to pay?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Everything is paid," replied the host, "and liberally. Go, then, and may God conduct you safely."

"Amen!" cried the young man, and set off at full gallop.

Four hours later he was in Neufchâtel. He strictly followed the instructions he had received. At Neufchâtel, as at St. Valery, he found a horse all saddled awaiting him. He was about to remove the pistols from the saddle he had vacated to the one he was about to occupy, but he found the holsters furnished with similar pistols.

"Your address at Paris?"

"Hôtel of the Guards, company of Des Essarts."

"Good," replied the landlord.

"Which route must I take?" demanded D'Artagnan, in his turn.

"That of Rouen; but you will leave the city on your right. You must stop at the little village of Écouis in which there is but one inn, the Shield of France. Don't condemn it from appearances; you will find a horse in the stables quite as good as this."

"The same password?"

"Exactly."

"Farewell, master!"

"A good journey, gentleman! Do you want anything?"

D'Artagnan shook his head in reply, and set off at full speed. At Écouis, the same scene was repeated. He found as obliging a host and a fresh horse. He left his address as he had done before, and set off again, at the same pace, for Pontoise. At Pontoise he changed his horse for the last time, and at nine o'clock galloped into the court of M. de Tréville's hôtel. He had covered nearly sixty leagues in twelve hours.

M. de Tréville received him as if he had seen him that same morning; only, when pressing his hand a little more warmly

than usual, he informed him that M. des Essarts's company was on duty at the Louvre, and that he might repair to his post.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BALLET OF LA MERLAISON.

THE next day nothing was talked of in Paris but the ball which the provosts of the city were to give to the king and queen, and in which their Majesties were to dance the famous La Merlaison, the king's favorite ballet.

The whole of the last week had been occupied in preparations at the City Hall for this important evening. The city carpenter had erected a staging upon which the ladies invited were to sit. The city grocer had ornamented the chambers with two hundred white wax flambeaux, which was a piece of luxury unheard of at that period. Finally twenty violins were ordered, and the price paid for them fixed at double the usual rate, upon condition, said the report, that they should play all night.

At ten o'clock in the morning, the Sieur de La Coste, ensign in the king's guards, followed by two officers and several archers of that body, came to the city registrar, whose name was Clement, and demanded of him all the keys of the chambers and offices of the hall. These keys were given up to him instantly. Each of them had a ticket attached to it by which it might be known, and from that moment the Sieur de La Coste was charged with the guarding of all the doors and all the avenues of approach.

At eleven o'clock came in his turn Duhallier, captain of the guards, bringing with him fifty archers, who were distributed immediately through the hall, at the doors which had been assigned to them.

At three o'clock arrived two companies of the guards, one French, the other Swiss. The company of French guards was composed half of M. Duhallier's men, and half of M. des Essarts's men.

At six o'clock in the evening the invited guests began to enter. According to the order in which they entered they were shown places on the platform.

At nine o'clock Madame la Première Présidente arrived. As, next to the queen, she was the most important personage of the fête, she was received by the city officials, and seated in a box opposite to the one which the queen was to occupy.

At ten o'clock the king's collation of sweetmeats was prepared in a little chamber facing the church of St. John, in front of the silver buffet of the city, which was guarded by four archers.

At midnight, great cries and loud acclamations were heard. It was the king, passing through the streets which led from the Louvre to the City Hall, and which were all illuminated with colored lanterns.

Immediately the provosts, clothed in their cloth robes and preceded by six sergeants, each holding a torch in his hand, went out to wait upon the king, whom they met on the steps, where the provost of the merchants made him the welcoming speech, a courtesy to which his Majesty replied, apologizing for coming so late, but laying the blame on the cardinal, who had detained him till eleven o'clock, talking of affairs of state.

His Majesty, in full dress, was accompanied by his Royal Highness Monsieur, the Comte de Soissons, the Grand Prior, the Duc de Longueville, the Duc d'Elbœuf, the Comte d'Harcourt, the Comte de la Roche-Guyon, M. de Liancourt, M. de Baradas, the Comte de Cramail, and the Chevalier de Souveray.

Everybody observed that the king looked listless and preoccupied.

A closet had been prepared for the king and another for Monsieur. In each of these closets were placed masquerade dresses. The same had been done with respect to the queen and Madame la Présidente. The nobles and ladies of their Majesties' suites were to dress, two by two, in rooms prepared for the purpose.

Before entering his closet the king desired to be informed the moment the cardinal arrived.

Half an hour after the king's entrance fresh acclamations were heard. These announced the queen's arrival. The provosts did as they had done before, and, preceded by their sergeants, went out to receive their illustrious guest.

The queen entered the great hall, and it was remarked that, like the king, she looked listless and especially fatigued.

At the moment she entered, the curtain of a small gallery, which up to that time had been closed, was drawn, and the cardinal, with a pale face and in the dress of a Spanish cavalier, appeared. His eyes were fixed on the queen's, and a smile of terrible joy passed over his lips. The queen did not have on the diamond studs.

The queen remained for a short time receiving the compliments of the city officials and replying to the greetings of the ladies.

All at once the king appeared with the cardinal at one of the doors of the hall. The cardinal was speaking to him in a low voice, and the king was very pale.

The king, without his mask and the ribbons of his doublet scarcely tied, made his way through the crowd, and, going straight to the queen, in an altered voice asked:

"Madame, why did you not wear your diamond studs, when you know it would have given me so much gratification?"

The queen cast a glance around her, and saw the cardinal behind, with a diabolical smile on his countenance.

"Sire," replied the queen, in a faltering voice, "because, in the midst of such a crowd as this, I feared some accident might happen to them."

"And you were wrong, madame! If I gave them to you it was that you might adorn yourself with them. I tell you, again, you were wrong."

And the king's voice was tremulous with anger. The company looked and listened with astonishment, understanding nothing of what was going on.

"Sire," said the queen, "I can send for them to the Louvre, where they are, and thus your Majesty's wishes will be complied with."

"Do so, madame! do so, and as quick as possible, for within an hour the ballet will begin."

The queen bowed in token of submission, and followed the ladies who were to conduct her to her closet.

The king returned to his.

A moment of uncertainty and confusion ensued in the room. Every one had noticed that something had passed between the king and queen, but as both of them had spoken very low, and as all the company had, from respect, kept several feet away, no one had heard anything. The violins began to play with all their might, but no one listened to them.

The king was the first to come out from his closet. He was attired in a most elegant hunting costume, and Monsieur and the other nobles were dressed as he was. This was the costume that was most becoming to the king, and when thus clothed he really appeared the first gentleman of his kingdom.

The cardinal drew near to the king, and placed a casket in his hand. The king opened it, and found in it two diamond studs.

"What does this mean?" demanded he of the cardinal.

"Nothing," replied the latter; "only if the queen has the studs, — but I very much doubt if she has, — count them, sire, and if you find only ten, ask her Majesty who can have stolen from her the two studs that are here?"

The king looked at the cardinal as if to ask him what it meant. But he had no time to put any question to him. A cry of admiration burst from every mouth. If the king appeared to be the first gentleman of his kingdom, the queen was assuredly the most beautiful woman in France.

True, her huntress habit was admirably becoming; she wore a beaver hat with blue feathers, a surtout of pearl-gray velvet fastened with diamond clasps, and a petticoat of blue satin embroidered in silver. On her left shoulder sparkled the diamond studs, on a bow of the same color as the plumes and the petticoat.

The king trembled with joy and the cardinal with vexation. However, at the distance they were from the queen, they could not count the studs. The queen had them; the only question was, had she ten or twelve?

At that moment the violins sounded the signal for the ballet The king advanced toward Madame la Présidente, with whom he was to dance, and his Highness Monsieur with the queen. They took their places and the ballet began.

The king danced facing the queen, and every time that he passed by her, he devoured with his eyes those studs, the number of which he could not make out. A cold sweat covered the cardinal's brow.

The ballet lasted an hour. It had sixteen figures.

The ballet ended amid the applause of the whole assemblage, and every one led his partner to her place. But the king took advantage of the privilege he had of leaving his lady, to hasten to the queen.

"I thank you, madame," said he, "for the deference you have shown to my wishes, but I think two of your studs are missing, and I bring them back to you."

At these words he held out to the queen the two studs the cardinal had given him.

"How, sire!" cried the young queen, affecting surprise; "you are giving me, then, two more. So now I shall have fourteen."

In fact, the king counted them, and the twelve studs were all on her Majesty's shoulder.

The king called the cardinal to him.

"What does this mean, cardinal?" asked the king, in a severe tone.

"This means, sire," replied the cardinal, "that I was desirous of presenting her Majesty with these two studs, and that, not venturing to offer them myself, I adopted this means of inducing her to accept them."

"And I am the more grateful to your Eminence," replied Anne of Austria, with a smile that proved she was not the dupe of this ingenious piece of gallantry, "since I am certain these two studs have cost you as dearly as all the others cost his Majesty."

Then, after bowing to the king and the cardinal, the queen took her way to the chamber where she had dressed, and where she was to take off her ball costume.

The attention which we were obliged to give, at the beginning of this chapter, to the illustrious personages we have introduced in it diverted us for an instant from him to whom Anne of Austria owed the extraordinary triumph she had just obtained over the cardinal; and who, obscure, unknown, lost in the crowd gathered at one of the doors, was a witness of this scene, comprehensible only to four persons, the king, the queen, his Eminence, and himself.

The queen had just regained her chamber, and D'Artagnan was about to retire, when he felt a light touch on his shoulder. He turned round, and saw a young woman who made him a sign to follow her. This young woman's face was covered with a black velvet mask, but, notwithstanding this precaution, which was, in fact, taken rather against others than against him, he at once recognized his usual guide, the gay and witty Madame Bonacieux.

On the evening before, they had seen each other for a brief moment only at the porter Germain's apartment where D'Artagnan had sent for her. The haste which the young woman was in to convey to her mistress the fine news of her messenger's happy return prevented the two lovers from exchanging more than a few words. D'Artagnan, therefore, followed Madame Bonacieux, moved by a double sentiment, love and curiosity. During the whole of the way, and in proportion as the corridors became more deserted, D'Artagnan wished to stop the young woman, seize her, and gaze upon her, were it only for a minute; but quick as a bird she slipped between his hands, and when he wished to speak to her, her finger placed on her mouth, with a little imperative gesture full of grace, reminded him that he was under the rule of a

power which he had blindly to obey, and which forbade him even to make the slightest complaint. At length, after a minute or two of turns and counter-turns, Madame Bonacieux opened the door of a closet, which was entirely dark, and led the young man into it. There she made a fresh sign of silence, and opening a second door, concealed by a tapestry which as it was drawn aside let in a sudden flood of brilliant light, she disappeared.

D'Artagnan remained for a moment motionless, asking himself where he could be, but soon a ray of light penetrating from the chamber, the warm and perfumed air reaching even to him, the conversation of two or three ladies in language at once respectful and elegant, and the word "Majesty" many times repeated, clearly indicated to him that he was in a closet adjoining the queen's chamber.

The young man stood in the shadow and waited.

The queen appeared cheerful and happy, and this seemed to astonish very much the persons surrounding her, who were accustomed, on the contrary, to see her almost always sad and full of care. The queen attributed this joyous feeling to the beauty of the ball, to the pleasure she had experienced in the ballet, and as it is not permissible to contradict a queen, whether she smile or whether she weep, all rivalled one another in expatiating on the gallantry of the provosts of the city of Paris.

Although D'Artagnan did not know the queen, he soon distinguished her voice from the others, at first by a slightly foreign accent, and next by that tone of domination naturally impressed upon all royal words. He heard her approach and withdraw from the open door, and twice or three times he even saw the shadow of a body intercept the light.

At length a hand and an arm, surpassingly beautiful in form and whiteness, suddenly glided through the tapestry. D'Artagnan understood that this was his reward. He cast himself on his knees, seized the hand, and touched it respectfully with his lips; then the hand was withdrawn, leaving in his an object which he perceived to be a ring. The door immediately closed, and D'Artagnan found himself again in complete darkness.

D'Artagnan placed the ring on his finger, and again waited: it was evident that all was not yet over. After the reward of his devotion, the reward of his love was to come. Besides, although the ballet was danced, the evening's pleasures had scarcely begun. Supper was to be served at three, and the clock of St. John had struck three-quarters after two.

In fact, the sound of voices in the adjoining chamber diminished by degrees; the company was then heard departing; then the door of the closet in which D'Artagnan was, was opened, and Madame Bonacieux entered quickly.

"You, at last?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Silence!" said the young woman, placing her hand upon his lips; "silence! and go the same way you came!"

"But where and when shall I see you again?" cried D'Artagnan.

"A note which you will find at home will tell you. Go! go!"

And at these words she opened the door of the corridor, and pushed D'Artagnan out of the closet. D'Artagnan obeyed like a child, without the least resistance or objection, which proves that he was really in love.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

D'Artagnan ran home immediately, and although it was after three o'clock in the morning, and he had the worst quarters of Paris to pass through, he met with no misadventure.

He found the door of his passage open, sprang up the stairs, and knocked softly, in a manner agreed upon between him and his lackey. Planchet, whom he had sent home two hours before from the City Hall, desiring him to sit up for him, came and opened the door.

"Has any one brought a letter for me?" asked D'Artagnan eagerly.

"No one has *brought* a letter, sir," replied Planchet; "but there is one come of itself."

"What do you mean by that, you stupid fellow?"

"I mean that when I came in, although I had the key of your apartment in my pocket and that key had never been out of my possession, I found a letter on the green table-cover in your bedroom."

"And where is that letter?"

"I left it where I found it, sir. It is not natural for letters to enter people's rooms in this manner. If the window had been open, or even ajar, I should think nothing of it. But no, all was as close as possible. Beware, sir; there is certainly some magic in it."

In the meantime the young man darted into his chamber, and was opening the letter. It was from Madame Bonacieux, and was conceived in these terms:

"Warm thanks are to be offered to you, and to be transmitted to you. Be at St. Cloud, this evening, about ten o'clock, in front of the pavilion at the corner of M. d'Estrées's hôtel. — C. B."

While reading this letter, D'Artagnan felt his heart expand and close with that delicious spasm that tortures and caresses the hearts of lovers.

It was the first note he had received, it was the first rendezvous that had been granted him. His heart, swelled by the intoxication of joy, felt ready to faint at the very gate of that terrestrial paradise called Love!

"Well, sir," said Planchet, who had noticed his master grow red and pale successively; "did I not guess truly? Is it not some bad business or other?"

"You are mistaken, Planchet," replied D'Artagnan; "and, as a proof, there is a crown to drink my health."

"I am much obliged to you for the crown you have given me, and I promise you I will obey your instructions exactly. But it is not the less true that letters which come in this manner into shut-up houses —"

"Fall from heaven, my friend, fall from heaven."

"Then you are happy?" asked Planchet.

"My dear Planchet, I am the happiest of men!"

"And I may profit by your happiness, and go to bed?"

"Yes, go."

"May the blessings of heaven fall upon you. But it is not the less true that that letter —"

And Planchet retired, shaking his head with an air of doubt, which D'Artagnan's liberality did not entirely succeed in removing.

Left alone, D'Artagnan read and re-read his note, then he kissed and kissed again twenty times the lines traced by the hand of his beautiful mistress. At length he went to bed, fell asleep, and had golden dreams.

At seven o'clock in the morning he arose and called Planchet, who, at the second summons, opened the door, his countenance not yet quite free from the anxiety of the preceding night.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "I am going out for all day, perhaps; you are, therefore, your own master till seven o'clock in the evening; but at seven o'clock you must hold yourself in readiness with two horses."

"There!" said Planchet. "It appears we are going to have our skins pierced again in several places."

"You will take your carbine and your pistols."

"There now! did I not say so?" cried Planchet. "I was sure of it — cursed letter!"

"Come, don't be afraid, you silly fellow! There is nothing on hand but a pleasure party."

"Ah! like that charming journey the other day, when it rained bullets and grew a crop of snares."

"Well, if you are really afraid, Mister Planchet," resumed D'Artagnan, "I will go without you. I prefer travelling alone to having a timid companion."

"You do me wrong," said Planchet; "I thought you had seen me at work."

"Yes, but I did not know whether you had not used up all your courage the first time."

"You shall see, on occasion, that I have some left; only I beg you not to be too prodigal of it, if you wish it to last long."

"Do you believe you still have a certain amount of it to expend this evening?"

"I hope I have, sir."

"Well, then, I depend upon you."

"At the appointed hour I shall be ready; only I believe you had but one horse in the guard stables."

"Perhaps there is but one at this moment; but by this evening there will be four."

"It appears that our journey is to be a journey for remounts, then?"

"Exactly so," said D'Artagnan; and nodding to Planchet, he went out.

M. Bonacieux was standing at his door. D'Artagnan's intention was to go out without speaking to the worthy mercer. But the latter made so polite and friendly a salutation that his tenant felt obliged not only to stop, but to enter into conversation with him.

Besides, how is it possible to avoid a little condescension toward a husband whose pretty wife has appointed a meeting with you that same evening at St. Cloud, opposite the pavilion of M. d'Estrées? D'Artagnan approached him with the most amiable air he could assume.

The conversation naturally fell upon the poor man's incarceration. M. Bonacieux, who was ignorant that D'Artagnan had overheard his conversation with the man of Meung, related

to his young tenant the persecutions of that monster, M. de Laffemas, whom he never ceased to qualify, during his account, with the title of the cardinal's executioner, and expatiated at great length upon the Bastille, the bolts, the wickets, the air-holes, the gratings, and the instruments of torture.

D'Artagnan listened to him with exemplary condescension, and when he had finished said:

"And Madame Bonacieux, do you know who carried her off? — for I do not forget that I owe to that unpleasant circumstance the good fortune of having made your acquaintance."

"Ah!" said Bonacieux, "they took good care not to tell me that, and my wife, on her part, has sworn to me, by all that's sacred, that she does not know. But you," continued M. Bonacieux, in a tone of perfect simplicity, "what have you been doing for several days past? I have not seen either you or any of your friends, and I don't think you could pick up from the pavement of Paris all that dust that I saw Planchet brush off your boots yesterday."

"You are right, my dear M. Bonacieux: my friends and I have been on a little journey."

"Far from Paris?"

"Oh, Lord, no! About forty leagues only. We went to take M. Athos to the waters of Forges, where my friends have remained."

"And so you have returned, have you?" replied M. Bonacieux, giving his countenance his most jocular air. "A handsome young fellow like you does not obtain long leave of absence from his mistress; and we were impatiently waited for at Paris, were we not?"

"'Pon my word!" said the young man, laughing, "I am fain to confess it, and so much the more readily, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux, as I see there is no concealing anything from you. Yes, I was expected, and very impatiently, I assure you."

A slight shade passed over Bonacieux's brow, but so slight that D'Artagnan did not perceive it.

"And we are going to be rewarded for our diligence?" continued the mercer, with a trifling alteration in his voice — so trifling, indeed, that D'Artagnan did not perceive it any more than he had the shade which, an instant before, had darkened the worthy man's countenance.

"Ah, you are a deep one!" said D'Artagnan, laughing.

"No; what I say is only that I may know whether you will come in late."

"Why do you ask me that question, my dear landlord? Do you intend to sit up for me?"

"No; only since my arrest and the robbery that was committed in my house, I am alarmed every time I hear a door opened, particularly in the night. What the deuce can you expect? I told you I was no swordsman."

"Well, don't be alarmed if I come home at one, two, or three o'clock in the morning; indeed, do not be alarmed if I do not come at all."

This time Bonacieux became so pale that D'Artagnan could not do otherwise than perceive it, and asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing," replied Bonacieux, "nothing; only since my misfortunes I have been subject to faintnesses, which seize me all at once, and I just felt a cold shiver. Pay no attention to it; you have nothing to occupy yourself with but being happy."

"Then I have plenty of occupation, for I am happy."

"Not yet — wait a little; this evening, you said."

"Well, this evening will come, thank God! And perhaps you look for it with as much impatience as I do; perhaps this evening Madame Bonacieux will visit the conjugal domicile."

"Madame Bonacieux is not at liberty this evening," replied the husband seriously; "she is detained at the Louvre this evening by her duties."

"So much the worse for you, my dear host, so much the worse for you! When I am happy, I wish everybody to be so; but it appears that is not possible."

And the young man departed, laughing at the joke, which he thought he alone could comprehend.

"Ah, have your laugh out!" replied Bonacieux, in a sepulchral tone.

But D'Artagnan was too far off to hear him, and if he had heard him, in the frame of mind he then was he certainly would not have remarked it.

He took his way toward M. de Tréville's hôtel. His visit the day before we remember had been very short, with little chances for confidential talk.

He found M. de Tréville in a most joyful mood. The king and queen had been charming to him at the ball. The cardinal, however, had been particularly ill-tempered; he had retired at one o'clock under the pretence of being indisposed. Their Majesties did not return to the Louvre till six o'clock.

"Now," said M. de Tréville lowering his voice and looking

round at every corner of the apartment to see whether they were alone, "now let us talk about yourself, my young friend; for it is evident that your fortunate return has something to do with the king's joy, the queen's triumph, and the cardinal's humiliation. You must look out for yourself."

"What have I to fear," replied D'Artagnan, "so long as I have the good fortune to enjoy their Majesties' favor?"

"Everything, believe me. The cardinal is not the man to forget a mystification until he has settled his accounts with the mystifier. And the mystifier appears to me to have the air of being a certain young Gascon of my acquaintance."

"Do you believe the cardinal is as well informed as you are, and knows that I have been to London?"

"The devil! you have been to London! Did you bring from London that beautiful diamond glittering on your finger? Beware, my dear D'Artagnan! A present from an enemy is not a good thing. Are there not some Latin verses upon that subject? Stop a minute —"

"Yes, doubtless," replied D'Artagnan, who had never been able to cram even the first rudiments of that language into his head, and who by his ignorance had driven his master to despair,— "yes, doubtless there is one."

"There certainly is one," said M. de Tréville, who had a smattering of letters, "and M. de Benserade was quoting it to me the other day. Stop a minute — ah, it is this:

"'*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,*'

which means, 'Beware of the enemy who makes you presents.'"

"This diamond does not come from an enemy, sir," replied D'Artagnan; "it comes from the queen."

"From the queen! oh, ho!" said M. de Tréville. "Why, it is, indeed, a genuine royal jewel, worth a thousand pistoles if it is worth a farthing. By whom did the queen send you this jewel?"

"She gave it to me herself."

"Where?"

"In the closet adjoining the chamber in which she changed her dress."

"How?"

"By giving me her hand to kiss."

"What! you have kissed the queen's hand?" said M. de Tréville, looking earnestly at D'Artagnan.

"Her Majesty did me the honor to grant me that favor."

"And that in the presence of witnesses! Imprudent woman! thrice imprudent!"

"No, sir; be assured no one saw her," replied D'Artagnan; and he told M. de Tréville how things had gone.

"Oh, women, women!" cried the old soldier. "I know them by their romantic imaginations; everything that savors of mystery charms them. So you saw her arm, that was all; you would meet the queen and you would not know her; she might meet you and she would not know who you were?"

"No; but thanks to this diamond . . . ." replied the young man.

"Listen to me," said M. de Tréville; "shall I give you a good piece of advice — a piece of friendly advice?"

"You will do me honor, sir," said D'Artagnan.

"Well, then, go to the nearest goldsmith's, and sell that diamond for the highest price you can get from him; however much of a Jew he may be, he will give you at least eight hundred pistoles. Pistoles have no name, young man, and that ring has a terrible one, which may betray him who wears it."

"Sell this ring — a ring which comes from my sovereign! Never!" said D'Artagnan.

"Then at least turn the stone inside, you silly fellow! For everybody must be aware that a cadet from Gascony does not find such gems in his mother's jewel-case."

"You think, then, I have something to fear?" said D'Artagnan.

"I mean, young man, that he who sleeps over a mine, the match of which is already lighted, may consider himself in safety in comparison with you."

"The devil," said D'Artagnan, who at M. de Tréville's positive tone began to feel a little uneasy; "the devil! What must I do?"

"Be at all times on your guard. The cardinal has a tenacious memory and a long arm. You may depend upon it, he will repay you by some ill turn."

"But what sort of one?"

"Eh! how can I tell? Has he not all the devil's tricks at command? The least that might happen would be your arrest."

"What! would they dare to arrest a man in his Majesty's service?"

"Zounds! they did not scruple much in the case of Athos. At all events, young man, believe one who has been thirty years at court. Do not lull yourself into security, or you will be lost; but, on the contrary, — and I tell you so, — see enemies

in all directions. If any one seeks a quarrel with you, shun it, were it with a child of ten years old; if you are attacked by day or by night, draw back, without shame; if you cross a bridge, feel every plank of it with your foot, lest one should give way beneath you; if you pass before a house which is building, look up, for fear a stone should fall upon your head; if you stay out late, be always followed by your lackey, and let your lackey be armed, if, by the by, you can be sure of your lackey. Mistrust everybody, your friend, your brother, your mistress — your mistress in particular."

D'Artagnan colored.

"My mistress," repeated he mechanically; "and why mistrust her rather than any other?"

"Because a mistress is one of the cardinal's favorite means — he has not one that is more expeditious. A woman will sell you for ten pistoles, witness Delilah. You are acquainted with the Scriptures, eh?"

D'Artagnan thought of the appointment Madame Bonacieux had made with him for that very evening; but we are bound to say, to the credit of our hero, that the bad opinion entertained by M. de Tréville of women in general did not inspire him with the least suspicion of his pretty hostess.

"But, by the way," resumed M. de Tréville, "what has become of your three companions?"

"I was about to ask you if you had heard no news of them."

"None whatever, sir."

"Well, I left them on my road: Porthos at Chantilly, with a duel on his hands; Aramis at Crèvecœur, with a ball in his shoulder; and Athos at Amiens, detained by an accusation of counterfeiting."

"See there, now!" said M. de Tréville; "and how the devil did you escape?"

"By a miracle, sir, I must acknowledge, with a sword-thrust in my breast, and by nailing Comte de Wardes, on the road back of Calais, like a butterfly on a tapestry."

"There again! De Wardes, one of the cardinal's men, a cousin of Rochefort's. But stop, my friend, I have an idea."

"Speak, sir."

"In your place, I would do one thing."

"What, sir?"

"While his Eminence was seeking for me in Paris, I should take, without sound of drum or trumpet, the road to Picardy, and should go and make some inquiries concerning my three

companions. What the devil! they richly merit that piece of attention on your part."

"Your advice is good, sir, and to-morrow I will set out."

"To-morrow! and why not this evening?"

"This evening, sir, I am detained in Paris by urgent business."

"Ah, young man, young man! Some love affair. Take care, I repeat to you, take care! Woman was the ruin of us all, is the ruin of us all, and will be the ruin of us all, as long as the world stands. Take my advice and set out this evening."

"It is impossible, sir."

"You have given your word, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, that's quite another thing; but promise me, if you should not happen to be killed to-night, that you will go to-morrow."

"I promise you, sir."

"Do you want money?"

"I still have fifty pistoles. That, I think, is as much as I shall need."

"But your companions?"

"I don't think they can be in need of any. We left Paris each with seventy-five pistoles in his pocket."

"Shall I see you again before your departure?"

"I think not, sir, unless something new happens."

"Well, a pleasant journey to you, then."

"Thank you, sir."

And D'Artagnan left M. de Tréville, touched more than ever by his paternal solicitude for his musketeers.

He called successively at the abodes of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. None of them had returned. Their lackeys likewise were absent, and nothing had been heard of either masters or servants.

He would have inquired after them of their mistresses, but he was not acquainted with Porthos's or Aramis's, and Athos had none.

As he passed the Hôtel des Gardes, he took a glance into the stables. Three of the four horses had already arrived. Planchet, much astonished, was busy grooming them, and had already finished with two.

"Ah, sir," said Planchet, on perceiving D'Artagnan, "how glad I am to see you!"

"Why so, Planchet?" asked the young man.

"Do you place confidence in our landlord, M. Bonacieux?"

"I? Not the least in the world."

"Oh! you do quite right, sir."

"But why do you ask?"

"Because, while you were talking with him, I watched you without listening to you; and, sir, his countenance changed color two or three times!"

"Bah!"

"Preoccupied as you were with the letter you had just received, you did not observe it; but, on the contrary, as I was put on my guard by the strange manner in which that letter had come into the house, I did not lose a movement of his face."

"And you found it—"

"Traitorous, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Besides, as soon as you had left, and disappeared round the corner of the street, M. Bonacieux took his hat, shut his door, and set off at a quick pace in an opposite direction."

"It seems you are right, Planchet; all this appears to be a little suspicious; and be assured that we will not pay him our rent until the matter shall be categorically explained to us."

"You joke, but you will see."

"What can you expect, Planchet? What must be shall be!"

"You have not then given up your excursion for this evening?"

"Quite the contrary, Planchet; the more ill-will I entertain toward M. Bonacieux, the more punctual I shall be in keeping the appointment made with me in that letter which gives you so much uneasiness."

"Then your determination is—"

"Is unalterable, my friend; so then, be ready here, at nine o'clock, at the hôtel. I will come and get you."

Planchet, seeing there was no longer any hope of making his master abandon his project, heaved a deep sigh, and set to work to groom the third horse.

D'Artagnan, being at bottom a prudent youth, instead of returning home, went and dined with the Gascon priest, who, at the time of the four friends' poverty, had given them a breakfast of chocolate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PAVILION.

At nine o'clock D'Artagnan was at the Hôtel des Gardes. He found Planchet under arms. The fourth horse had arrived.

Planchet was armed with his carbine and a pistol. D'Artagnan had his sword, and placed two pistols in his belt; then both mounted, and departed quietly. It was quite dark, and no one saw them go out. Planchet followed his master, and kept at a distance of about ten paces from him.

D'Artagnan crossed the quays, went out by the gate of La Conférence, and went along the road, much more beautiful then than it is now, leading to St. Cloud.

As long as he was in the city, Planchet kept at the respectful distance he had imposed upon himself. But as soon as the road began to be lonely and darker he quietly drew nearer; so that when they entered the Bois de Boulogne, he found himself riding quite naturally side by side with his master. In fact, we must admit that the oscillation of the tall trees, and the moonlight flecking the dark underwood, gave him serious uneasiness. D'Artagnan perceived that something more than usual was passing in the mind of his lackey, and said:

"Well, Master Planchet! what is the matter with us now?"

"Don't you think, sir, that woods are like churches?"

"How so, Planchet?"

"Because we dare not speak aloud in either."

"Why do you not dare to speak aloud, Planchet? — because you are afraid?"

"Afraid of being heard — yes, sir."

"Afraid of being heard? Why, our conversation is quite proper, my dear Planchet, and no one could find fault with it."

"Ah, sir!" replied Planchet, recurring to his besetting idea, "that M. Bonacieux has something sly in his eyebrows, and something very unpleasant in the play of his lips."

"What the devil makes you think of Bonacieux now?"

"Sir, we think of what we can, and not of what we will."

"Because you are a coward, Planchet."

"Sir, we must not confound prudence with cowardice: prudence is a virtue."

"And you are very virtuous, are you not, Planchet?"

"Is not that a musket barrel glittering yonder, sir? Had we not better duck our heads?"

"Truly," murmured D'Artagnan as M. de Tréville's advice recurred to him, "this animal will end by making me afraid."

And he put his horse into a trot. Planchet followed the movements of his master as if he had been his shadow, and was soon trotting by his side.

"Are we going to continue this pace all night?" asked Planchet.

"No, for you are at your journey's end."

"I, sir, at my journey's end? and you?"

"Why, I am going a few steps farther."

"And do you intend to leave me here alone?"

"You certainly are afraid, Planchet?"

"No; but I only beg leave to observe to you that the night will be very cold, that chills bring on rheumatism, and that a lackey who has the rheumatism makes but a poor servant, particularly to a master as active as you are."

"Well, if you are cold, Planchet, you can go into one of those saloons that you see yonder, and be waiting for me at the door by six o'clock in the morning."

"Sir, I have eaten and drunk in your honor the crown you gave me this morning; so that I have not a sou left, in case I should be cold."

"Here's a half-pistole. To-morrow morning, then."

D'Artagnan sprang from his horse, threw the bridle to Planchet, and departed at a quick pace, folding his cloak round him.

"Good Lord, how cold I am!" cried Planchet, as soon as he had lost sight of his master; and in such haste was he to warm himself that he went straight to a house set out with all the attributes of a suburban inn, and knocked at the door.

In the meantime D'Artagnan, who had plunged into a by-path, continued his route, and reached St. Cloud; but instead of following the highway, he turned behind the château, reached a sort of retired lane, and found himself soon in front of the pavilion named. It was situated in a very private spot. A high wall, at the angle of which was the pavilion, ran along one side of this lane, and on the other a hedge protected from passers-by a little garden, at the rear of which stood a small cottage.

He was now on the place appointed, and as no signal had been given him by which to announce his presence, he waited

Not the least noise was to be heard; one might have thought one's self a hundred miles from the capital. D'Artagnan leaned against the hedge, after having cast a glance behind him. Beyond that hedge, that garden, and that cottage, a dark mist enveloped with its folds that immensity in which sleeps Paris, a vast void in which glittered a few luminous points, the funeral stars of that hell!

But for D'Artagnan all things visible wore a joyful dress, all ideas had a smile, all darknesses were diaphanous. The appointed hour was about to strike.

In fact, at the end of a few minutes the belfry of St. Cloud let fall slowly ten strokes from its huge sonorous jaws.

There was something lugubrious in this brazen voice pouring out its lamentations in the midst of the night.

But every one of those strokes which made up the expected hour vibrated harmoniously in the young man's heart.

His eyes were fixed upon the little pavilion situated at the angle of the wall, all the windows of which were closed with shutters, except one on the first story.

Through this window shone a mild light silvering the trembling foliage of two or three linden trees that formed a group outside the park. Evidently behind this little window, which threw forth such friendly beams, pretty Madame Bonacieux was awaiting him.

Wrapt in this sweet idea, D'Artagnan waited half an hour without the least impatience, his eyes fixed upon that charming little abode. He could perceive a part of the ceiling with its gilded mouldings, attesting the elegance of the rest of the apartment.

The clock on St. Cloud's struck half-past ten.

This time, without at all knowing why, D'Artagnan felt a shiver run through his veins. Perhaps the cold was beginning to affect him, and he took a purely physical sensation for a mental impression.

Then the idea seized him that he had read incorrectly, and that the appointment was for eleven o'clock. He drew near to the window, so as to stand under a ray of light, and taking the letter out of his pocket read it again; but he had not been mistaken — the appointment was for ten o'clock.

He went and resumed his post, beginning to be rather uneasy at this silence and this solitude.

It struck eleven!

D'Artagnan began now really to fear that something had happened to Madame Bonacieux.

He clapped his hands three times, the ordinary signal of lovers; but nobody replied to him — not even an echo.

He then thought, with a touch of vexation, that perhaps the young woman had fallen asleep while waiting for him.

He approached the wall and tried to climb it; but the wall had been recently pointed, and he could obtain no hold.

At that moment he noticed the trees, on the leaves of which the light still shone, and as one of them drooped over the road, he thought that from its branches he might succeed in looking into the pavilion.

The tree was easy to climb. Besides, D'Artagnan was scarcely twenty, and consequently had not yet forgotten his school-boy habits. In an instant he was among the branches, and his eyes penetrated through the clear glass into the interior of the pavilion.

It was something strange, something that made D'Artagnan cold from the sole of his foot to the roots of his hair, to find that this soft light, this peaceful lamp, lighted up a scene of fearful disorder. One of the panes of glass was broken, the door of the room had been burst in, and hung, split in two, on its hinges; a table, which had been covered with an elegant supper, was overturned; the decanters, broken in pieces, and the crushed fruits, strewed the floor; everything in the apartment gave evidence of a violent and desperate struggle; D'Artagnan even fancied he could recognize, amid this strange disorder, fragments of garments, and some bloody spots staining the cloth and the curtains.

He hastened down into the street, with his heart throbbing frightfully; he wished to see if he could find any other traces of violence.

The little soft light continued to shine in the calm of the night. D'Artagnan then perceived a thing that he had not before remarked, for nothing had led him to this scrutiny, that the ground, trampled here and hoof-marked there, presented confused traces of men and horses. Besides, the wheels of a carriage, which appeared to have come from Paris, had made a deep impression in the soft earth, not extending beyond the pavilion, but turning again towards Paris.

At length D'Artagnan, in following up his researches, found near the wall a woman's torn glove. Yet this glove, wherever it had not touched the muddy ground, was of irreproachable freshness. It was one of those perfumed gloves that lovers like to snatch from a pretty hand.

As D'Artagnan pursued his investigations, at every fresh

discovery a more abundant and more icy sweat stood in drops on his forehead; his heart was oppressed by a horrible anguish, his respiration was broken and short; and yet he said, to reassure himself, that this pavilion, perhaps, had nothing to do with Madame Bonacieux; that the young woman had made an appointment with him in front of the pavilion, and not in the pavilion; that she might have been detained in Paris by her duties, or perhaps by her husband's jealousy.

But all these reasons were combated, destroyed, overthrown, by that sense of inward discomfort which, occasionally, takes possession of our being, and cries to us, in an unmistakable language, that some great misfortune is hanging over us.

Then D'Artagnan became almost wild; he ran along the highway, retraced his steps, and, coming to the ferry, closely questioned the boatman.

About seven o'clock in the evening, the boatman said, he had taken over a young woman, enveloped in a black mantle, who appeared to be very anxious not to be recognized; but the boatman, simply on account of her precautions, had paid more special attention to her, and discovered that she was young and pretty.

There was then, as there is now, a crowd of pretty young women who came to St. Cloud, and who had good reasons for not being seen, and yet D'Artagnan did not for an instant doubt that it was Madame Bonacieux whom the boatman had noticed.

D'Artagnan took advantage of the lamp burning in the boatman's cabin to read Madame Bonacieux's note once again, and satisfy himself that he had not been mistaken, that the appointment was at St. Cloud and not elsewhere, before M. d'Estrées's pavilion and not in another street.

Everything conspired to prove to D'Artagnan that his presentiments had not deceived him, and that a great misfortune had happened.

He again ran back to the château; it appeared to him that something might have happened at the pavilion in his absence, and that fresh information was awaiting him.

The lane was still empty, and the same calm, soft light shone from the window.

D'Artagnan then thought of that mute, blind cottage: it must have seen and perhaps could speak!

The gate was locked, but he leaped over the hedge, and, in spite of the barking of a chained dog, went up to the cabin.

There was no answer to his first knocking. A death-like

silence reigned in the cottage as in the pavilion; but as the cottage was his last resource, he kept knocking.

It soon appeared to him that he heard a slight noise within, a timid noise, seeming itself to tremble.

Then D'Artagnan ceased to knock, and entreated with an accent so full of anxiety and promises, terror and persuasion, that his voice was of a nature to reassure the most timid. At length an old, worm-eaten shutter was opened, or rather pushed ajar, but closed again as soon as the light from a miserable lamp burning in the corner had shone upon D'Artagnan's baldric, sword-hilt, and pistol pommels. Nevertheless, rapid as the movement had been, D'Artagnan had had time to get a glimpse of an old man's head.

"In the name of heaven," cried he, "listen to me! I have been waiting for some one who has not come. I am dying with anxiety. Could any misfortune have happened in the neighborhood? Speak!"

The window was again opened slowly, and the same face appeared again. Only it was paler than before.

D'Artagnan related his story simply, with the omission of names. He told how he had an appointment with a young woman before that pavilion, and how, seeing she did not come, he had climbed the linden tree, and by the lamp-light had seen the disorder of the chamber.

The old man listened attentively, making a sign only that it all was so; and then, when D'Artagnan had ended, he shook his head with an air that foreboded nothing good.

"What do you mean?" cried D'Artagnan. "In the name of heaven, tell me, explain yourself."

"Go! sir," said the old man, "ask me nothing; for if I told you what I have seen, certainly no good would befall me."

"You have then seen something?" replied D'Artagnan. "In that case, in the name of heaven," continued he, throwing him a pistole, "tell me what you have seen, and I will pledge you the faith of a gentleman that not one of your words shall escape from my heart."

The old man read so much truth and so much grief in the young man's face that he made him a sign to listen, and speaking in a low voice said:

"It was about nine o'clock when I heard a noise in the street, and was wondering what it could be, when on coming to my gate, I found that somebody was endeavoring to open it. As I am poor, and am not afraid of being robbed, I went and opened the gate and saw three men at a few paces from

it. In the shade was a coach with horses, and some saddle-horses. These saddle-horses evidently belonged to the three men, who were dressed as cavaliers.

"'Ah! my worthy gentlemen,' cried I, 'what do you want?'

"'Have you a ladder?' said the one who appeared to be the leader of the party.

"'Yes, sir, the one with which I gather my fruit.'

"'Lend it to us, and go into your house again; there is a crown for the trouble we cause you. Only remember this, if you speak a word of what you may see or hear (for you will look and listen, I am quite sure, however we may threaten you), you are lost.'

"At these words he threw me a crown, which I picked up and he took my ladder.

"Well, then, after I had shut the gate behind them, I pretended to go into the house again, but I immediately went out at a back door, and stealing along in the shade, I gained yonder clump of elder, from which I could see everything without being seen.

"The three men brought the carriage up quietly, and took out of it a little stout, short, elderly man, poorly dressed in dark-colored clothes. He climbed the ladder very carefully, looked slyly in at the window of the pavilion, came down as quietly as he had gone up, and whispered:

"'It is she!'

"Immediately the one who had spoken to me approached the door of the pavilion, opened it with a key he had in his hand, closed the door and disappeared, while at the same time the other two men mounted the ladder. The little old man remained at the coach door, the coachman took care of his horses, a lackey held the saddle-horses.

"All at once loud screams resounded in the pavilion, and a woman ran to the window and opened it, as if to throw herself out of it; but as soon as she perceived the other two men, she sprang back and they got into the chamber.

"Then I saw no more; but I heard the noise of breaking furniture. The woman screamed and cried for help; but her cries were soon stifled. Two of the men appeared, bearing the woman in their arms, and carried her to the carriage; the little old man entered it after her. The one who stayed in the pavilion closed the window, came out an instant after at the door, and satisfied himself that the woman was in the carriage. His two companions were already on horseback; he sprang into his saddle, the lackey took his place by the coachman, the

carriage went off at a rapid pace, escorted by the three horsemen, and all was over. From that moment I have neither seen nor heard anything."

D'Artagnan, entirely overcome by such terrible news, remained motionless and mute, while all the demons of anger and jealousy were howling in his heart.

"But, my good gentleman," resumed the old man, upon whom this mute despair certainly produced a greater effect than cries and tears would have done, "do not take on so; they did not kill her, that's the main thing."

"Have you any idea," asked D'Artagnan, "who the man was who led this infernal expedition?"

"I did not know him at all."

"But, since he spoke to you, you must have seen him."

"Oh! you want a description of him, do you?"

"I do."

"A tall, swarthy man, with black moustaches, dark eyes, and the appearance of a gentleman."

"That's the man!" cried D'Artagnan; "again he, always he! He is my evil demon, evidently! And the other?"

"Which?"

"The short one."

"Oh! he was not a gentleman, I'll answer for it; besides, he did not wear a sword, and the others treated him with no consideration."

"Some lackey," murmured D'Artagnan. "Poor woman! poor woman! What have they done with you?"

"You have promised me silence, sir!" said the old man.

"And I repeat my promise — have no anxiety; I am a gentleman. A gentleman has but his word, and I have given you mine."

With a broken heart, D'Artagnan again bent his way toward the ferry. Sometimes he could not believe it was Madame Bonacieux, and hoped he should find her next day at the Louvre; sometimes he feared she had been having an intrigue with some one else, who, in a jealous fit, had surprised her and carried her off. His mind was torn by doubt, grief, and despair.

"Oh! if I had my three friends here," cried he, "I should have, at least, some hopes of finding her; but who knows what has become of them?"

It was almost midnight; the next thing was to find Planchet. D'Artagnan went successively into all the saloons where there was a light, but could not find Planchet in any of them.

At the sixth he began to reflect that the search was rather a matter of chance. Planchet's appointment was for six o'clock in the morning, and wherever he might be, he was acting according to directions.

It occurred to D'Artagnan that by remaining in the neighborhood of the spot where this mysterious affair had taken place, he should, perhaps, obtain some light on it. At the sixth saloon, then, as we said, D'Artagnan stopped, asked for a bottle of wine of the best quality, and taking his place in the darkest corner of the room, determined thus to wait till daylight; but this time again his hopes were disappointed, and although he listened with all his ears, he heard nothing amid the oaths, coarse jokes, and abuse passing between the workmen, servants, and carters, who composed the honorable society of which he formed a part, that could put him at all on the track of the poor abducted woman. He was compelled, then, after having swallowed the contents of his bottle, in order to pass the time as well as to avoid suspicion, to find the easiest position possible in his corner, and to sleep as well as he could. D'Artagnan, be it remembered, was only twenty years old, and at that age sleep has imprescriptible rights, which it imperiously insists upon, even over the saddest hearts.

Towards six o'clock D'Artagnan awoke with that uncomfortable feeling which daylight generally brings after a bad night. He was not long in making his toilet; he examined himself to see if advantage had not been taken to rob him while he was asleep, and having found his diamond ring on his finger, his purse in his pocket, and his pistols in his belt, he got up, paid for his wine, and went out to see whether he could have any better luck in his search for his lackey than he had had the night before. In reality the first thing he perceived through the damp gray mist was honest Planchet, who, with the two horses in hand, was waiting for him at the door of an obscure little tavern, before which D'Artagnan had passed without even a suspicion of its existence.

CHAPTER XXV.

PORTHOS.

INSTEAD of returning directly home, D'Artagnan alighted at M. de Tréville's door and quickly ran upstairs. This time he was determined to relate all that had passed. As M. de Tréville saw the queen almost every day, he might be able to get from her Majesty some news of the poor young woman whom they were doubtless making pay very dearly for her devotion.

M. de Tréville listened to the young man's account with a seriousness which proved that he saw something else in all this adventure than a love affair; and when D'Artagnan had finished:

"Hum!" said he; "all this smacks of his Eminence, a league off."

"But what is to be done?" said D'Artagnan.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, at present, but to leave Paris, as I told you, as soon as possible. I will see the queen; I will relate to her the details of this poor woman's disappearance, of which she is, no doubt, ignorant. These details will guide her on her part, and, on your return, I shall perhaps have some good news to tell you. Count on me."

D'Artagnan knew that, although a Gascon, M. de Tréville was not in the habit of making promises, and that when by chance he did promise, he generally more than kept his word. He bowed to him, then, full of gratitude for the past and for the future, and the worthy captain, who, on his side, felt a lively interest in this young man who was so brave and resolute, pressed his hand affectionately, while wishing him a pleasant journey.

Determined instantly to put M. de Tréville's advice into practice, D'Artagnan rode toward the Rue des Fossoyeurs, in order to superintend the packing of his portmanteau. On approaching the house, he perceived M. Bonacieux, in morning costume, standing at his door. All that the prudent Planchet had said to him the preceding evening about his landlord's sinister character recurred to D'Artagnan's mind as he looked at him with more attention than he had done before. In fact, in addition to that yellow, sickly pallor which indicates infiltration of bile in the blood, and which might, however, be only accidental, D'Artagnan remarked something craftily perfidious in the play of the wrinkles of his face. A rogue does not

laugh in the same way that an honest man does; a hypocrite does not shed the same sort of tears that a man of good faith does. All falsehood is a mask, and however well made the mask may be, with a little attention we may always succeed in distinguishing it from the true face.

So it appeared to D'Artagnan that M. Bonacieux wore a mask, and likewise that this mask was most disagreeable to look upon.

Consequently, overcome by his repugnance for this man, he was about to pass him without speaking, when M. Bonacieux accosted him just as he had done the day before.

"Well, young man," said he, "we appear to pass rather gay nights! Seven o'clock in the morning! Hang it! you seem to reverse ordinary customs, and come home at the hour when other people are going out."

"No one can reproach you for anything of the kind, Master Bonacieux," said the young man; "you are a model for sober people. It is true that when a man has a young and pretty wife, he has no need of seeking happiness elsewhere; happiness comes to meet him, does it not, Monsieur Bonacieux?"

Bonacieux grinned a ghastly smile.

"Ah! ha!" said Bonacieux; "you are a jocular companion! But where the devil were you gadding last night, my young master? It does not appear to be very clean in the cross-roads."

D'Artagnan glanced down at his boots, all covered with mud, but that same glance fell upon the mercer's shoes and stockings; it might have been said they had been dipped in the same mud-hole; both were stained with splashes of the very same appearance.

Then a sudden thought crossed D'Artagnan's mind. That little short and elderly stout man, that sort of lackey, dressed in dark clothes, treated without consideration by the men wearing swords who composed the escort, was Bonacieux himself! The husband had participated in the abduction of his wife!

A terrible inclination immediately took possession of D'Artagnan to seize the mercer by the throat and strangle him; but, as we have said, he was a very prudent youth, and he restrained himself. The change, however, in his countenance was so manifest that Bonacieux was terrified at it, and endeavored to draw back a step or two, but he was exactly in front of the wing of the door, which was shut, and the obstacle which he met compelled him to keep his place.

"Ah! ha! but you are joking, my worthy man!" said D'Artagnan. "It appears to me that if my boots want sponging your stockings and shoes stand in equal need of brushing. May you not have been philandering a little also, Master Bonacieux? Oh! the devil! that's unpardonable in a man of your age, and who, besides, has such a pretty young wife as yours is!"

"Oh, Lord, no!" said Bonacieux; "but yesterday I went to Saint Mandé, to make some inquiries after a servant, whom I cannot possibly do without, and as the roads were bad I brought back all this mud, which I have not yet had time to remove."

The place which Bonacieux named as the objective point of his journey was a fresh proof in support of the suspicions D'Artagnan had conceived. Bonacieux had named Saint Mandé, because Mandé was in an exactly opposite direction to Saint Cloud. This probability afforded him his first consolation. If Bonacieux knew where his wife was, the mercer might at any time be forced, by the use of extreme means, to open his mouth and let his secret escape. The question, then, was only to change this probability into a certainty.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Monsieur Bonacieux, if I don't stand on ceremony," said D'Artagnan, "but nothing makes one so thirsty as want of sleep; I am parched with thirst; allow me to take a glass of water in your apartment; you know that is never refused among neighbors!"

And without waiting for his host's permission D'Artagnan went quickly into the house, and cast a rapid glance at the bed. The bed had not been slept in. Bonacieux had not been to bed. He had been back only an hour or two; he had accompanied his wife to the place where they took her, or else, at least, to the first relay.

"Many thanks to you, Master Bonacieux," said D'Artagnan, emptying his glass. "That is all I wanted of you. I will now go up into my room. I am going to have Planchet brush my boots, and when he has done, I will, if you like, send him to you to brush your shoes."

And he left the mercer quite astonished at his singular farewell, and asking himself if he had not been a little injudicious himself.

At the top of the stairs he found Planchet in a great fright.

"Ah! sir!" cried Planchet, as soon as he perceived his master, "here is more trouble! I thought you would never come in!"

"What's the matter now, Planchet?"

"Oh! sir, I give you a hundred, I give you a thousand, guesses about the visit I received while you were out."

"When?"

"Half an hour ago, while you were at M. de Tréville's."

"Who has been here? Come, speak!"

"M. de Cavois."

"M. de Cavois?"

"In person."

"The captain of his Eminence's guards?"

"Himself."

"Did he come to arrest me?"

"I have no doubt he did, sir, for all his wheedling manner."

"Wheedling manner, did you say?"

"He was all honey, sir."

"Indeed!"

"He came, he said, on the part of his Eminence, who wished you well, to beg you to follow him to the Palais-Royal."

"What did you answer him?"

"That the thing was impossible, seeing that you were not at home, as he might perceive."

"Well, what did he say then?"

"That you must not fail to call upon him in the course of the day; and then he added in a low voice, 'Tell your master that his Eminence is very well disposed toward him, and that his fortune perhaps depends upon this interview.'"

"The snare is not very skilfully set, for the cardinal," replied the young man, smiling.

"I also saw the snare, and I answered you would be quite in despair, on your return. — 'Where has he gone?' asked M. de Cavois. — 'To Troyes, in Champagne,' I answered. — 'And when did he set out?' — 'Yesterday evening.'"

"Planchet, my friend," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you are really a jewel of a man."

"You will understand, sir, I thought there would be still time, if you wish to see M. de Cavois, to give me the lie by saying you had not yet gone. The falsehood would then be mine, and as I am not a gentleman, I may be allowed to lie."

"Be of good heart, Planchet, you shall preserve your reputation as a man of truth; in a quarter of an hour we start."

"That's just the advice I was going to give, sir. And where are we going, may I ask, — without being too curious?"

"Zounds! in the opposite direction to that which you said

I had gone. Besides, are you not as anxious to get news of Grimaud, Mousqueton, and Bazin as I am to know what has become of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis?"

"Oh! yes, sir," said Planchet, "and I will go as soon as you please; indeed, I think country air will suit us much better just now than the air of Paris. So then —"

"So then, pack up our necessaries, Planchet, and let us be off. On my part, I will go out ahead with my hands in my pockets, that nothing may be suspected. You can join me at the Hôtel des Gardes. By the way, Planchet, I think you are right with respect to our host; decidedly, he is a frightfully low wretch."

"Ah! sir! you may take my word when I tell you anything. I am a physiognomist, I assure you!"

D'Artagnan went out first, as had been agreed upon; then, that he might have nothing to reproach himself with, he went for the last time to the residences of his three friends. No news had been received of them; only a letter, all perfumed, and of an elegant and delicate handwriting, had come for Aramis. D'Artagnan took charge of it. Ten minutes afterwards, Planchet joined him at the stables of the Hôtel des Gardes. D'Artagnan, in order that there might be no time lost, had saddled his horse himself.

"All right," said he to Planchet, when the latter added the portmanteau to the equipment; "now saddle the other three horses."

"Do you think that we shall travel faster with two horses apiece?" said Planchet, with his cunning air.

"No, master joker," replied D'Artagnan, "but with our four horses we may bring back our three friends, if we find them living."

"Which would be great luck," replied Planchet; "but indeed we must not despair of God's mercy."

"Amen!" cried D'Artagnan, getting into his saddle.

As they left the Hôtel des Gardes, they separated, going along the street in opposite directions, the one expecting to leave Paris by the gate of La Villette, and the other by the gate of Montmartre, with the understanding that they were to meet again beyond St. Denis. This, a strategetic manœuvre, was executed with perfect punctuality, and was crowned with the most fortunate results. D'Artagnan and Planchet entered Pierrefitte together.

Planchet was more courageous, it must be admitted, by day than by night.

His natural prudence, however, never forsook him for a single instant; he had not forgotten one of the incidents of the first journey, and he looked upon everybody he met on the road as an enemy. It followed that his hat was forever in his hand, which cost him some severe reprimands from D'Artagnan, who feared that his excess of politeness would lead people to think he was the lackey of a man of no consequence.

Nevertheless, whether the passers-by were really touched by Planchet's urbanity, or whether this time no one had been stationed in ambush on the young man's road, our two travellers arrived at Chantilly without any accident, and alighted at the hotel of the Great Saint Martin, the same they had stopped at on their first trip.

The host, on seeing a young man followed by a lackey with two led horses, advanced respectfully to the door. Now, as they had already travelled eleven leagues, D'Artagnan thought it time to stop, whether Porthos were or were not in the hotel. And then perhaps it would not be prudent to ask at once what had become of the musketeer. The result of these reflections was that D'Artagnan, without asking for information of any kind, alighted, consigned the horses to the care of his lackey, entered a small room destined to receive those who wished to be alone, and asked the landlord to bring him a bottle of his best wine, and as good a breakfast as possible, a request which further corroborated the high opinion the innkeeper had formed of the traveller at first sight.

D'Artagnan was therefore served with miraculous celerity.

The regiment of the guards was recruited among the first gentlemen of the kingdom, and D'Artagnan, followed by a lackey with four magnificent horses, could not fail to make a sensation, in spite of the simplicity of his uniform. The host himself desired to wait upon him. D'Artagnan, perceiving this, ordered two glasses to be brought, and began the following conversation:

"'Pon my word! my good host," said D'Artagnan, filling the two glasses, "I asked for a bottle of your best wine, and if you have deceived me, your sin will bring its own punishment, for, seeing that I hate drinking by myself, you shall drink with me. Take your glass, then, and let us drink. But what shall we drink to, come, so as to avoid wounding any susceptibility? Let us drink to the prosperity of your establishment."

"Your Lordship does me much honor," said the host, "and I thank you sincerely for your kind wishes."

"But don't mistake," said D'Artagnan, "there is more selfishness in my toast than perhaps you may think; for it is only in prosperous establishments that one is well received. In hotels that are running down, everything is in confusion, and the traveller is a victim to his host's embarrassments. Now, I travel a great deal, particularly on this road, and I should like to see all landlords making a fortune."

"I was thinking," said the host, "that it was not the first time I had had the honor of seeing you."

"Bah! I have passed, perhaps, ten times through Chantilly, and out of the ten times, I have stopped at least three or four times at your house. Why, I was here only ten or twelve days ago; I was conducting some friends, musketeers, one of whom, by the by, had a dispute with a stranger, a man who for some unknown reason sought a quarrel with him."

"Ah! exactly so!" said the host; "I remember it perfectly. Is it not M. Porthos that your Lordship means?"

"Yes; that is my companion's name. Good heavens! my dear host, has any misfortune happened to him?"

"Your Honor must have observed that he could not continue his journey."

"Why, but he promised to rejoin us, and we have seen nothing of him."

"He has done us the honor of remaining here."

"What! he has done you the honor of remaining here?"

"Yes, sir, in this hotel; and we are even very uneasy —"

"About what?"

"Certain debts he has incurred."

"Well, but whatever debts he may have incurred, he will pay."

"Ah! sir, you pour balm into my heart! We have made considerable advances; and only this morning the surgeon declared that if M. Porthos did not pay him, he should look to me, as it was I who had sent for him."

"What, is Porthos wounded?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"What! you cannot tell me! Surely you ought to be able to tell me better than any other person."

"Yes; but in our situation we must not say all we know; particularly when we have been warned that our ears should answer for our tongues."

"Well, can I see Porthos?"

"Certainly, sir. Take the stairs on your right; go up the first flight, and knock at No. 1. Only warn him that it is you."

"Warn him! Why should I do that?"

"Because, sir, some mischief might happen to you."

"What mischief might happen to me, pray?"

"M. Porthos may suppose you are some one connected with the house, and in a fit of passion might run his sword through you, or blow out your brains."

"What have you been doing to him, then?"

"We asked him for money."

"The devil! — ah! I can understand that; such a demand Porthos takes very ill when he is not in funds; but I know he ought to be."

"We thought so too, sir; as our house is very methodical, and as we make our bills every week, at the end of a week we presented our account; but it appeared we had chosen an unlucky moment, for at the first word on the subject, he sent us to the very devil; it is true he had been playing the day before."

"Playing the day before! — and with whom?"

"Lord! who can say, sir? With a gentleman who was travelling this way, to whom he proposed a game of lansquenet."

"That's it, then! and the foolish fellow lost all he had."

"Even to his horse, sir; for when the gentleman was about to set out, we perceived that his lackey was saddling M. Porthos's horse. We called his attention to this, and he told us to mind our own business, as this horse belonged to him. We also informed M. Porthos of what was going on; but he told us we were scoundrels to doubt a gentleman's word; and that as the gentleman had said the horse was his, there could be no doubt that it was so."

"That's Porthos all over!" murmured D'Artagnan.

"Then," continued the host, "I sent him word that from the moment we seemed unlikely to reach an understanding with respect to payment I hoped he would have, at least, the kindness to grant the favor of his custom to my brother host of the Golden Eagle; but M. Porthos replied that, as my hotel was the best, he preferred to remain here.

"This reply was too flattering to allow me to insist on his departure. I confined myself then to begging him to give up his room, which is the handsomest in the hotel, and to be satisfied with a pretty little chamber on the third floor. But to this M. Porthos replied that as he every moment expected his mistress, who was one of the greatest ladies of the court, I might easily comprehend that the room he did me the honor

to occupy in my house was itself very mean for the visit of such a personage.

"Nevertheless, though acknowledging the truth of what he said, I thought proper to insist; but without even giving himself the trouble to enter into any discussion with me, he took one of his pistols, laid it on his night stand, and declared that at the first word said to him about moving either inside the house or out of it, he would blow out the brains of the person imprudent enough to meddle with a matter that concerned himself alone. So from that time, sir, nobody enters his chamber except his servant."

"What! Mousqueton is here, then?"

"Yes, sir; five days after his departure, he came back in a very bad humor. It appears that he had also met with unpleasant experiences on his journey. Unfortunately he is more nimble than his master; so that for his master's sake he turns everything upside down, and as he thinks we might refuse what he asks for, he takes all he wants without asking at all."

"Well, the fact is," said D'Artagnan, "I have always observed a high degree of intelligence and devotion in Mousqueton."

"Very possibly, sir. But suppose that I should happen to be brought in contact, only four times a year, with such intelligence and devotion — why, I should be a ruined man!"

"No! for Porthos will pay you."

"Hum!" said the host, in a doubting tone.

"He is the favorite of a great lady who will not allow him to be inconvenienced for such a paltry sum as he owes you."

"If I may venture to say what I think in regard to that —"

"What you think?"

"I ought rather to say: what I know."

"What you know?"

"And even what I am sure of."

"Come! what are you sure of?"

"I would say that I know this great lady."

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"And how did you become acquainted with her?"

"Oh! sir, if I could believe I might trust in your discretion —"

"Speak: on the faith of a gentleman, you shall have no cause to repent of your confidence."

"Well, sir, you understand that uneasiness makes us do many things."

"What have you done?"

"Oh! nothing that a creditor has not a right to do."

"Go on!"

"M. Porthos gave us a note for this duchess, asking us to post it. This was before his servant had come. As he could not leave his room we had to run on his errands."

"Well!"

"Instead of putting the letter in the post, which is never safe, I took advantage of one of my lads going to Paris, and I ordered him to give the letter to this duchess himself. This was fulfilling the intentions of M. Porthos, who had desired us to be so careful of this letter, was it not?"

"Nearly so."

"Well, sir, do you know who this great lady is?"

"No; I have heard Porthos speak of her, that's all."

"Do you know who this pretended duchess is?"

"I repeat I don't know her."

"Why, sir, she is the old wife of a solicitor of the Châtelet, named Madame Coquenard; who, although she is at least fifty, still gives herself jealous airs. It struck me as very odd that a princess should live in the Rue aux Ours."

"But how do you know all this?"

"Because she flew into a great passion on receiving the letter, saying that M. Porthos was a fickle man, and that she was sure it was on account of some woman again that he had received this wound."

"What! Has he been wounded?"

"Oh! good Lord! what have I said?"

"You said that Porthos was wounded."

"Yes, but he had so strictly forbidden me to say so!"

"And why so?"

"Zounds! sir, only because he had boasted that he would perforate the stranger with whom you left him in dispute, whereas the stranger, on the contrary, in spite of all his braggadocio, quickly brought him to the ground. Now, as M. Porthos is a very vain-glorious man, he insists that nobody shall know he has received this wound, except the duchess, whom he endeavored to interest by an account of his adventure."

"It is a wound, then, that confines him to his bed?"

"Ah! and a master thrust, too, I assure you. Your friend must have nine lives."

"Were you there, then?"

"Sir, I followed them from curiosity, so that I saw the combat without the combatants seeing me."

"And what took place?"

"Oh! the affair was not long, I assure you. They placed themselves on guard. The stranger made a feint and a lunge, and that so rapidly that when M. de Porthos came to parry, he had already three inches of steel in his breast. He fell on his back. The stranger immediately placed the point of his sword on his throat; and M. Porthos, finding himself at the mercy of his adversary, confessed himself conquered. Whereupon the stranger asked his name, and, learning that it was Porthos, and not D'Artagnan, assisted him to rise, brought him back to the hotel, mounted his horse, and disappeared."

"So this stranger meant to quarrel with M. d'Artagnan"

"It appears so."

"And do you know what became of him?"

"No; I never saw him until that moment, and we have not seen him since."

"Very well! Now I know all that I wished to know. Porthos's room is, you say, on the first story, No. 1?"

"Yes, sir, the handsomest in the inn; a room that I could have let ten times over."

"Bah! Don't be anxious," said D'Artagnan, laughing; "Porthos will pay you with the Duchess Coquenard's money."

"Oh! sir, *procureuse* or duchess, if she will but loosen her purse-strings, it will be all the same; but she positively answered that she was tired of M. Porthos's unreasonable demands and infidelities, and that she would not send him a farthing."

"And did you convey this answer to your guest?"

"We took good care not to do that; he would have found out how we had done his errand."

"So that he is still in expectation of his money?"

"Oh! dear me, yes, sir! Yesterday he wrote again, but this time his servant posted his letter."

"Do you say the *procureuse* is old and ugly?"

"Fifty, at least, sir, and not at all handsome, according to Pathaud's account."

"In that case, you may be quite at ease; she will soon be softened. Besides, Porthos cannot owe you much."

"What, not much! Twenty good pistoles already, without reckoning the doctor. Bless you, he denies himself nothing; you can see he has been accustomed to live well."

"Never mind! If his mistress abandons him, he will find friends, I will answer for it. So, my dear host, have no anxiety, and continue to take all the care of him that his situation requires."

"You have promised me not to open your mouth about the *procureuse*, and not to say a word about the wound?"

"That's a thing agreed upon — you have my promise."

"Oh! he would kill me, don't you see?"

"Don't be afraid: he is not so fierce as he seems."

Saying these words, D'Artagnan went upstairs, leaving his host a little better satisfied with respect to two things in which he appeared to be very much interested — his debt and his life.

At the top of the stairs, on the most conspicuous door of the corridor, was traced in black ink a gigantic "No. 1." D'Artagnan knocked, and upon being told from inside to enter, went into the chamber.

Porthos was in bed, and was playing a game of lansquenet with Mousqueton, to keep his hand in, while a spit loaded with partridges was turning before the fire, and at each side of a large chimney-piece, over two chafing-dishes, were boiling two stew-pans, from which exhaled a double odor of rabbit and garlic stews, very grateful to the olfactory nerves. In addition to this, he perceived that the top of a wardrobe and the marble of a stand were covered with empty bottles.

At the sight of his friend, Porthos uttered a loud cry of joy; and Mousqueton, rising respectfully, yielded his place to him, and went to give an eye to the two stew-pans, over which he appeared to have especial care.

"Ah! zounds! is that you!" said Porthos to D'Artagnan. "Welcome! Excuse my not coming to meet you. But," added he, looking at D'Artagnan, with a certain degree of uneasiness, "you know what has happened to me?"

"Not exactly."

"Has the landlord told you nothing, then?"

"I asked after you, and came straight up."

Porthos seemed to breathe more freely.

"And what then has happened to you, my dear Porthos?" continued D'Artagnan.

"Why, on making a thrust at my adversary, whom I had already hit three times, and with whom I meant to finish by a fourth, my foot slipped on a stone and I sprained my knee."

"Indeed!"

"Honor bright! Luckily for the rascal, for I should have left him dead on the spot, I assure you."

"And what became of him?"

"Oh! I don't know; he had enough, and set off without wanting any more. But you, my dear D'Artagnan, what has happened to you?"

"So that this sprain," continued D'Artagnan, "my dear Porthos, keeps you here in bed?"

"Really, that's all! I shall be about again, however, in a few days."

"Why did you not have yourself carried to Paris? You must be sadly bored here."

"That was my intention; but, my dear friend, I have one thing to confess to you."

"What's that?"

"It is that, as I was sadly bored, as you say, and as I had in my pocket the seventy-five pistoles which you had apportioned to me, in order to amuse myself I invited a gentleman who was travelling this way to walk up, and proposed a game of dice to him. He accepted my challenge, and, 'pon my word, my seventy-five pistoles quickly passed from my pocket to his, without reckoning my horse, which he won into the bargain. But you, I want to know about you, D'Artagnan?"

"What can you expect, my dear Porthos; a man is not privileged in all ways," said D'Artagnan. "You know the proverb: 'Unlucky at play, lucky in love.' You are too fortunate in love for play not to take its revenge; what consequence can the reverses of fortune be to you?—have you not, lucky rogue that you are, have you not your duchess, who cannot fail to come to your assistance?"

"Well, you see, my dear D'Artagnan, with what ill-luck I play," replied Porthos, with the most careless air in the world; "I wrote to her to send me fifty louis or so, of which I stood absolutely in need, on account of my accident—"

"Well!"

"Well, she must be at her country-seat, for she has not answered me."

"Indeed!"

"No; so yesterday I addressed another letter to her, still more urgent than the first. But you are here, my dear fellow, let us speak of you. I confess I began to be rather uneasy on your account."

"But your host behaves very well towards you, as it appears, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan, directing the sick man's attention to the full stew-pans and the empty bottles.

"So, so!" replied Porthos. "Only three or four days ago the impertinent jackanapes gave me his bill, and I was forced to turn both him and his bill out of doors; so that I am here something in the fashion of a conqueror, holding my position,

as it were, by conquest. So, you see, being in constant fear of being forced in my position, I am armed to the teeth."

"And yet," said D'Artagnan, laughing, "it appears to me that from time to time you must make sorties."

And he again pointed to the bottles and the stew-pans.

"No, not I, unfortunately!" said Porthos. "This miserable sprain confines me to my bed, but Mousqueton forages and brings in provisions. Friend Mousqueton, you see that we have a reinforcement, and we must have an increase of provisions."

"Mousqueton," said D'Artagnan, "you must do me a service."

"Of what kind, sir?"

"You must give your receipt to Planchet. I may be besieged in my turn, and I should not be sorry for him to make me enjoy the same advantages with which you gratify your master."

"Lord, sir!" said Mousqueton with a modest air, "there is nothing easier. It only requires to have a little skill, that's all. I was brought up in the country, and my father, in his leisure moments, was something of a poacher."

"And the rest of the time, what did he do?"

"He carried on a trade, sir, which I have always found pretty lucrative."

"What was that?"

"As it was in the time of the wars between the Catholics and the Huguenots, and as he saw the Catholics exterminating the Huguenots and the Huguenots exterminating the Catholics, and all in the name of religion, he adopted a mixed belief, which permitted him to be sometimes a Catholic, sometimes a Huguenot. Now, he was accustomed to walk, with his fowling-piece on his shoulder, behind the hedges which border the roads, and when he saw a Catholic coming alone, the Protestant religion immediately prevailed in his mind. He levelled his gun in the direction of the traveller; then, when he was within ten paces of him, he began a conversation which almost always ended by the traveller abandoning his purse to save his life. Of course, when he saw a Huguenot coming, he felt himself seized with such an ardent Catholic zeal that he could not understand how, a quarter of an hour before, he had been able to have any doubts upon the superiority of our holy religion. For, sir, I am a Catholic; my father was faithful to his principles, and made my elder brother a Huguenot."

"And what was the end of this worthy man?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Oh! of the most unfortunate kind, sir. One day he was caught in a sunken road between a Huguenot and a Catholic, with both of whom he had already had to do, and who both recognized him; so they united against him and hung him on a tree; then they came and boasted of their fine exploit in the tavern at the next village, where my brother and I were drinking."

"And what did you do?" said D'Artagnan.

"We let them tell their story out," replied Mousqueton. "Then, as in leaving the tavern they took different directions, my brother went and hid himself on the Catholic's road, and I on the Protestant's. Two hours after, all was over; we had done the business of both of them, admiring the foresight of our poor father, who had taken the precaution to bring each of us up in a different religion."

"Well, as you say, your father must have been a very intelligent fellow. And you say, then, that in his leisure moments the worthy man was a poacher?"

"Yes, sir, and he taught me to lay a snare and ground a line. The result is that when I saw our rascal of a host wanted to feed us upon lumps of fat meat fit for workmen, which did not at all suit such delicate stomachs as ours, I had recourse to a little of my old trade. While walking in the prince's wood, I laid a few snares in the runs; and while reclining on the banks of his Highness's pools, I slipped a few lines into his ponds. So that now, thanks be to God! as you yourself can testify, we do not lack for partridges, rabbits, carp, or eels — all light, wholesome food, suitable for sick persons."

"But the wine," said D'Artagnan, "who furnishes the wine? That, at least, must be your landlord?"

"That is to say, yes and no."

"How yes and no?"

"He furnishes it, it is true, but he does not know that he has that honor."

"Explain yourself, Mousqueton; your conversation is full of instructive things."

"This is the way of it, sir. Chance brought it about that I met with a Spaniard in my peregrinations, who had seen many countries, and among them the New World. This Spaniard had in his service a lackey who had accompanied him in his voyage to Mexico. This lackey was a compatriot of mine, and we became intimate the more quickly from there being many resemblances of character between us. We loved hunting of all kinds better than anything, so that he

related to me how, in the plains of the pampas, the natives hunt the tiger and the wild bull with simple running-nooses, which they throw round the necks of those terrible animals. At first I would not believe that they could attain such skill as to throw the end of a cord with such precision to a distance of twenty or thirty paces; but in face of the proof I was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the account. My friend placed a bottle at the distance of thirty paces, and at each cast he caught the neck of the bottle in his running-noose. I practised this exercise, and since nature has endowed me with some faculties, to-day I can throw the lasso with any man in the world. Well, do you understand? Our host has a well-furnished cellar, the key of which is never out of his possession; but his cellar has a loop-hole. Now, through this loop-hole I throw my lasso, and as I now know which part of the cellar the best wine is in, I draw from there. Now, will you taste our wine, and, without prejudice, tell us what you think of it?"

"No, thank you, my friend; no, thank you; unfortunately I have just breakfasted."

"Well," said Porthos, "set the table, Mousqueton, and while we breakfast, D'Artagnan will tell us what has happened to him during the ten days since he left us."

"Willingly," said D'Artagnan.

While Porthos and Mousqueton were breakfasting with the appetites of convalescents, and with that brotherly cordiality which unites men in misfortune, D'Artagnan related how Aramis had been wounded, and was obliged to stop at Crèvecœur, how he had left Athos fighting at Amiens with four men who accused him of being a counterfeiter, and how he, D'Artagnan, had been forced to pass over the Comte de Wardes's body in order to reach England.

But there D'Artagnan's disclosure ended. He only added that on his return from Great Britain he had brought back four magnificent horses, one for himself, and one for each of his companions; finally he informed Porthos that the one intended for him was already installed in the stable of the hotel.

At that moment Planchet entered. He informed his master that the horses were sufficiently refreshed, and that it would be possible to sleep at Clearmont.

As D'Artagnan was tolerably reassured with regard to Porthos, and as he was anxious to obtain news of his two other friends, he held out his hand to the sick man, and told him he was going to resume his route in order to prosecute his

researches. However, as he reckoned upon returning by the same road, if, in seven or eight days, Porthos were still at the hotel of the Great St. Martin, he would call for him on his way.

Porthos replied that, according to all probability, his sprain would not permit him to depart during that time. Moreover, it was necessary for him to stay at Chantilly to wait for an answer from his duchess.

D'Artagnan wished that her answer might be prompt and favorable; and after having again recommended Porthos to the care of Mousqueton, and paid his reckoning to the landlord, he resumed his route with Planchet, who was now relieved of one of his led horses.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ARAMIS'S THESIS.

D'Artagnan had said nothing to Porthos of his wound or of his *procureuse*. He had appeared to believe all that the vain-glorious musketeer had told him, convinced that no friendship will hold out against a secret obtained by accident, particularly when pride is deeply interested in that secret. Besides, we always enjoy a certain mental superiority over those whose lives we know about without their suspecting it. Now, in his projects of intrigue for the future, and determined as he was to make his three friends the instruments of his fortune, D'Artagnan was not sorry at uniting in his grasp beforehand the invisible strings by which he counted upon moving them.

And yet, as he journeyed along, a profound sadness weighed upon his heart. He thought of the young and pretty Madame Bonacieux, who was to have paid him so richly for all his devotion. But let us hasten to say, this sadness came upon the young man less from the regret for the happiness he had missed than from the fear he entertained that some misfortune had befallen the poor woman. In his mind there was no doubt that she was a victim of the cardinal's vengeance, and, as we well know, his Eminence's vengeance was terrible. He did not know in the least how he could have found grace in the minister's eyes, but doubtless M. de Cavois would have revealed it to him, if the captain of the guards had found him at home.

Nothing makes time pass more quickly or shortens a journey

more than a thought which absorbs in itself all the faculties of the being of him who thinks. External existence then resembles a sleep of which this thought is the dream. Through its influence, time no longer has measure, space no longer has distance. We depart from one place and arrive at another — that is all. Of the interval covered, nothing remains in the memory but a vague mist in which a thousand confused images of trees, mountains, and landscapes are dimly seen. Under the spell of this hallucination D'Artagnan, letting his horse take his own gait, traversed the six or eight leagues between Chantilly and Crèvecœur; he was unable to remember, when he had reached that village, any of the things he had met with on the road.

There only memory returned to him; he shook his head, perceived the tavern where he had left Aramis, and, putting his horse to the trot, pulled up at the door.

This time not a host, but a hostess, received him. D'Artagnan was a physiognomist, his eye took in at a glance the plump, cheerful countenance of the mistress of the place, and he at once perceived there was no occasion for dissembling with her, or of fearing anything from such a jolly woman.

"My good dame," asked D'Artagnan, "could you tell me what has become of a friend of mine whom we were obliged to leave here about ten days ago?"

"A handsome young man, of twenty-three or four, mild, amiable, and well made?"

"That's it."

"Wounded, moreover, in the shoulder?"

"Just so."

"Well, sir, he is still here!"

"Ah! zounds! my dear dame," said D'Artagnan, springing from his horse and throwing the bridle to Planchet, "you restore me to life. Where is my dear Aramis? Let me embrace him! for, I confess it, I am quite anxious to see him again."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I doubt whether he can see you at this moment."

"Why so? Is he with a lady?"

"Dear me! what do you mean by that? Poor lad! No, sir, he is not with any woman!"

"With whom is he, then?"

"With the Vicar of Montdidier and the Superior of the Jesuits of Amiens."

"Good heavens!" cried D'Artagnan; "is the poor fellow worse, then?"

"Oh! no, sir, quite the contrary; but after his illness grace touched him, and he determined to take orders."

"Oh! that's it!" said D'Artagnan; "I had forgotten that he was only a musketeer temporarily."

"Are you still anxious to see him?"

"More so than ever."

"Well, you have only to take the right-hand staircase in the yard and knock at No. 5, on the second floor."

D'Artagnan hastened in the direction pointed out, and found one of those outside staircases such as are still to be seen in the yards of old-fashioned inns. But there was no getting in this way at the future abbé's room. The defiles of Aramis's chamber were neither more nor less guarded than the gardens of Armida. Bazin was stationed in the corridor, and barred his passage with the greater intrepidity, because, after many years of trial, he found himself on the point of attaining the result which had ever been his ambition.

In fact, poor Bazin's dream had always been to serve a churchman, and he was waiting impatiently the moment, anticipated so long, when Aramis should at last throw aside the uniform and assume the cassock. The promise renewed every day by the young man, that the moment would not long be delayed, had alone kept him in the service of a musketeer, a service in which, he said, his soul was in constant jeopardy.

Bazin was then at the summit of delight. According to all probability, this time his master would not retract. The union of physical pain with moral pain had produced the effect so long desired. Aramis, suffering at once in body and mind, had at length fixed his eyes and his thoughts upon religion, and he had considered as a warning from heaven the double accident which had happened to him, that is to say his mistress's sudden disappearance and the wound in his shoulder.

We can understand that, in his present frame of mind, nothing could be more disagreeable to Bazin than D'Artagnan's arrival, which might cast his master back again into the vortex of mundane affairs that had so long carried him away. He resolved then to defend the door bravely; and as, betrayed by the mistress of the inn, he could not say that Aramis was absent, he endeavored to prove to the new-comer that it would be the height of indiscretion to disturb his master in the pious conference which had begun early that morning, and could not be, as Bazin said, terminated before night.

But D'Artagnan took very little heed of Master Bazin's eloquent discourse, and as he had no desire to support a polemic

discussion with his friend's valet, he simply pushed him aside with one hand, and with the other turned the handle of the door, No. 5.

The door opened, and D'Artagnan went into the chamber.

Aramis, in a black gown, his head covered with a sort of round, flat head-dress, much like a calotte, was seated before an oblong table, covered with rolls of paper and enormous folio volumes; at his right hand was seated the superior of the Jesuits, and on his left the Vicar of Montdidier. The curtains were half drawn, and admitted only a mysterious light calculated for beatific reveries. All the mundane objects that generally strike the eye on entering a young man's room, particularly when that young man is a musketeer, had disappeared as by enchantment; and, for fear no doubt that the sight of them might bring his master back to the ideas of this world, Bazin had laid violent hand on sword, pistols, plumed hat, embroideries and laces of all kinds and descriptions.

But in their stead and place, D'Artagnan thought he perceived in an obscure corner something like a scourge hanging from a nail in the wall.

At the noise made by D'Artagnan in entering, Aramis raised his head and recognized his friend. But to the young man's great astonishment the sight of him did not produce much effect upon the musketeer, so completely was his mind detached from the things of this world.

"Good afternoon to you, dear D'Artagnan," said Aramis; "believe me, I am very glad to see you."

"So am I delighted to see you," said D'Artagnan, "although I am not yet very sure that it is Aramis I am speaking to."

"Yes, it is I, my friend, it is I! But what makes you doubt?"

"I was afraid I had made a mistake in the chamber, and that I had found my way into the apartment of some churchman. Then I made another error on finding you in company with these gentlemen — I was afraid you were dangerously ill."

The two men in black, guessing D'Artagnan's meaning, darted at him a glance that was almost threatening, but D'Artagnan took no heed of it.

"I disturb you, perhaps, my dear Aramis," continued D'Artagnan, "for by what I see, I am led to believe you are confessing to these gentlemen."

Aramis colored imperceptibly.

"You? disturb me? Oh! quite the contrary, dear friend, I

swear; and as a proof of what I say, allow me to rejoice at seeing you safe and sound."

"Ah! he'll come round after a while!" thought D'Artagnan; "that's not bad!"

"For this gentleman, who is my friend, has just escaped from a serious danger," continued Aramis with unction, pointing to D'Artagnan, and addressing the two ecclesiastics.

"Give God praise, sir," replied they, bowing in unison.

"I have not failed to do so, your Reverences," replied the young man, returning their salutation.

"You arrive very opportunely, D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "and, by taking part in our discussion, may assist us with your learning. The Principal of Amiens, the Vicar of Montdidier, and I are arguing certain theological questions, in which we have been interested for some time. I should be delighted to have your opinion."

"A soldier's opinion can have very little weight," replied D'Artagnan, who began to get uneasy at the turn things were taking, "and you had better be satisfied, believe me, with the knowledge of these gentlemen."

The two men in black bowed in their turn.

"On the contrary," replied Aramis, "your opinion will be very valuable. The question is this: The Principal thinks that my thesis ought to be especially dogmatic and didactic."

"Your thesis! Are you then preparing a thesis?"

"Certainly," replied the Jesuit; "in the examination which precedes ordination, a thesis is always requisite."

"Ordination!" cried D'Artagnan, who could not believe what the hostess and Bazin had successively told him; "ordination!"

And he gazed with astonished eyes on the three persons before him.

"Now," continued Aramis, taking the same graceful position in his easy chair that he would have assumed at a morning reception, and complacently examining his hand, which was as white and plump as a woman's, and which he held up to cause the blood to descend, "now, as you have heard, D'Artagnan, the Principal is desirous that my thesis should be dogmatic, while I, for my part, would rather it should be ideal. This is the reason why the Principal has proposed to me the following subject, which has not yet been treated, and in which I perceive there is material for magnificent developments: '*Utraque manus in benedicendo clericis inferioribus necessaria est.*'"

D'Artagnan, whose erudition we are well acquainted with, evinced no more interest in this quotation than in the one made by M. de Tréville regarding the gifts which he supposed the Duke of Buckingham had bestowed on the young man.

"That means," resumed Aramis, that he might make the matter perfectly plain, "'both hands are indispensable for priests of the inferior orders when they give the benediction.'"

"An admirable subject!" cried the Jesuit.

"Admirable and dogmatic!" repeated the vicar, who, being about as strong in his Latin as D'Artagnan, carefully watched the Jesuit, in order to keep step with him, and repeat his words like an echo.

As to D'Artagnan, he remained perfectly indifferent to the enthusiasm of the two men in black.

"Yes, admirable! *prorsus admirabile!*" continued Aramis; "but it requires a profound study of both the Scriptures and the Fathers. Now, I have confessed to these learned ecclesiastics, and that in all humility, that the duties of mounting guard and the service of the king have caused me to neglect my studies a little. I should find myself, therefore, more at my ease, *facilius natans*, in a subject of my own choice, which would be to these hard theological questions what morals are to metaphysics in philosophy."

D'Artagnan began to be bored, and so did the vicar.

"See what an exordium!" cried the Jesuit.

"Exordium," repeated the vicar, for the sake of saying something.

"*Quemadmodum inter cœlorum immensitatem.*"

Aramis glanced at D'Artagnan, and found his friend yawning enough to dislocate his jaw.

"Let us speak French, worthy Father," said he to the Jesuit; "M. D'Artagnan will enjoy our conversation more."

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "I am fatigued with riding, and I fail to grasp all this Latin."

"Agreed," replied the Jesuit, a little put out, while the vicar, greatly delighted, threw on D'Artagnan a look full of gratitude. "Well, let us see what is to be derived from this gloss.

"Moses, the servant of God, — he was but a servant, please to understand! — Moses blessed with his hands; he held out both his arms while the Hebrews were beating their enemies. Therefore he blessed them with his two hands. Besides, what does the gospel say: '*Imponite manus,*' and not '*manum.*' Lay on the hands and not the hand."

"Lay on the hands," repeated the vicar, making a gesture.

"For St. Peter, on the contrary, whose successors the popes are," continued the Jesuit, "'*Porrige digitos,*' present the fingers. Do you see that now?"

"Certainly," replied Aramis, in a pleased tone, "but the thing is subtle."

"The fingers!" resumed the Jesuit; "St. Peter blessed with the fingers. The pope, therefore, blesses also with the fingers. And with how many fingers does he bless? With three fingers: one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Ghost."

All crossed themselves; D'Artagnan thought it was proper to follow their example.

"The pope is St. Peter's successor, and represents the three divine powers. The rest, *ordines inferiores,* of the ecclesiastical heirarchy, bless in the name of the holy archangels and angels. The most humble clerks, such as our deacons and sacristans, bless with aspergills or holy-water sprinklers, which are like an indefinite number of blessing fingers. Here's the subject simplified. *Argumentum omni denudatum ornamento.* I could make of that subject," continued the Jesuit, "two volumes of the size of this."

And, in his enthusiasm, he pounded on a folio volume of St. Chrysostom, which was making the table bend beneath its weight.

D'Artagnan trembled.

"Certainly," said Aramis, "I do justice to the beauties of this thesis, but, at the same time, I perceive it would be overwhelming for me. I had chosen this text — tell me, dear D'Artagnan, if it is not to your taste: '*Non inutile est desiderium in oblatione;*' or, still better, 'A little regret is not unsuitable in an offering to the Lord.'"

"Stop there!" cried the Jesuit, "for that thesis smacks of heresy. There is a proposition almost like it in the *Augustinus* of the heresiarch Jansenius, whose book will, sooner or later, be burnt by the hangman. Take care, my young friend; you will be lost!"

"You will be lost," said the vicar, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"You are nearing that famous point of free-will, which is a fatal reef. You are sailing dangerously close to the insinuations of the Pelagians and the semi-Pelagians."

"But my Reverend — " replied Aramis, somewhat dumbfounded by the hail of arguments that poured on his head.

"How will you prove," continued the Jesuit, without allowing him time to speak, "that we ought to regret the world when we offer ourselves to God? Listen to this dilemma: God is God, and the world is the devil. To regret the world is to regret the devil; that is my conclusion."

"And mine, also," said the vicar.

"But for Heaven's sake —" resumed Aramis.

"*Desideras diabolum*, unhappy man," cried the Jesuit.

"He regrets the devil! Ah! my young friend," added the vicar, groaning, "do not regret the devil, I implore you!"

D'Artagnan felt himself growing idiotic; it seemed to him he was in a madhouse, and that he was becoming as mad as those he saw. He was, however, forced to hold his tongue, as he did not comprehend the language they employed.

"But listen to me, now," resumed Aramis, with a politeness under which began to show a little impatience. "I do not say I regret; no, I will never pronounce that sentence, as it would not be orthodox."

The Jesuit raised his hands toward heaven, and the vicar did the same.

"No, but grant at least that it is bad grace to offer to the Lord only that with which we are perfectly disgusted? Don't you think so, D'Artagnan?"

"Zounds! I think so, indeed," cried he.

The Jesuit and the vicar started from their chairs.

"This is my point of departure; it is a syllogism. The world is not wanting in attractions; I quit the world, therefore I make a sacrifice. Now, the Scripture says positively, 'Make a sacrifice unto the Lord.'"

"That is true," said his antagonists.

"And then," said Aramis, pinching his ear to make it red, as he smoothed his hands to make them white, "and then I made a little rondeau on it last year, which I showed to M. Voiture, and that young man paid me a thousand compliments."

"A rondeau!" said the Jesuit, disdainfully.

"A rondeau!" said the vicar, mechanically.

"Repeat it! repeat it!" cried D'Artagnan; "it will give some variety."

"Not so, for it is religious," replied Aramis; "it is theology in verse."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan.

"Here it is," said Aramis, with a somewhat modest air, which was not exempt from a certain shade of hypocrisy:

Vous qui pleurez un passé plein de charmes,
Et qui traînez des jours infortunés,
Tous vos malheurs se verront terminés,
Quand à Dieu seul vous offrirez vos larmes,
Vous qui pleurez !

Oh, you who weep for joys that long have flown,
Whose mournful days in vain regrets now creep,
Your woes will all in deep oblivion sleep,
If you will offer up your tears to God alone —
Oh, you who weep !

D'Artagnan and the vicar appeared pleased. The Jesuit persisted in his opinion.

"Beware of a profane taste in your theological style. What, indeed, says St. Augustin? *Severus sit clericorum sermo.*"

"Yes, let the sermon be clear," said the vicar.

"But," hastily interrupted the Jesuit, on seeing that his acolyte was going astray, "but your thesis would please the ladies; it would have the same kind of success as one of M. Patru's pleadings."

"I hope to God it may!" cried Aramis, transported.

"There it is," cried the Jesuit; "the world still speaks within you in a loud voice, *altissimâ voce.* You follow the world, my young friend, and I tremble lest grace prove ineffectual."

"Rest assured, my reverend father, I can answer for myself."

"Mundane presumption!"

"I know myself, father; my resolution is irrevocable."

"Then you persist in continuing this thesis?"

"I feel myself called upon to treat this, and no other. I shall then continue it, and to-morrow I hope you will be satisfied with the corrections I shall have made in consequence of your advice."

"Work slowly," said the vicar; "we leave you in an excellent frame of mind."

"Yes, the ground is all sown," said the Jesuit, "and we have not to fear that one portion of the seed may have fallen upon stony ground, another by the wayside, or that the birds of heaven have eaten the rest, *aves cœli comederunt illam.*"

"Plague take you and your Latin!" said D'Artagnan, who felt all his patience exhausted.

"Farewell, my son," said the vicar, "till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow, my rash young friend," said the Jesuit.

"You promise to become one of the lights of the Church. Heaven grant that this light prove not a devouring fire!"

D'Artagnan, who, for an hour past, had been gnawing his nails with impatience, was now beginning to attack the flesh.

The two men in black rose, bowed to Aramis and D'Artagnan, and advanced toward the door. Bazin, who had been standing listening to all this controversy with a pious jubilation, sprang toward them, took the vicar's breviary and the Jesuit's missal, and walked respectfully before them to clear their way.

Aramis conducted them to the foot of the stairs, and then immediately came back again to D'Artagnan, who was still dreaming.

When left alone, the two friends at first kept silence from embarrassment. It, however, was necessary for one of them to break it the first, and as D'Artagnan appeared determined to leave that honor to his friend —

"You see," said Aramis, "that I have returned to my original ideas."

"Yes; saving grace has touched you, as that gentleman said just now."

"Oh, these plans of retreat have been formed for a long time; you have often heard me speak of them, have you not, my friend?"

"Yes; but I must confess that I always thought you were joking."

"About such things! Oh, D'Artagnan!"

"Yes, indeed! People can joke about death."

"And people are wrong, D'Artagnan; for death is the door which leads to perdition or to salvation."

"Granted; but, if you please, let us not theologize, Aramis; you must have had enough for to-day; as for me, I have almost forgotten the little Latin I ever knew. Then I confess to you that I have eaten nothing since ten o'clock this morning, and I am devilish hungry."

"We will dine directly, my friend; only you must please to remember that this is Friday. Now, on such a day, I cannot eat meat or see it eaten. If you can be satisfied with my dinner, it consists of cooked tetragones and fruits."

"What do you mean by tetragones?" asked D'Artagnan anxiously.

"I mean spinach," replied Aramis; "but, on your account, I will add some eggs; even that is a serious infraction of the rule, for eggs are meat, since they engender chickens."

"This feast is not very nutritious; but never mind, I will put up with it for the sake of remaining with you."

"I am grateful to you for the sacrifice," said Aramis; "but if your body be not greatly benefited by it, be assured your soul will."

"And so, Aramis, you are decidedly going into the Church? What will our friends say? What will M. de Tréville say? They will treat you as a deserter, I warn you."

"I do not enter the Church — I reënter it. I deserted the Church for the world, for you know that I did violence to myself when I became a musketeer."

"I know nothing about it."

"You don't know how I quitted the seminary?"

"Not at all."

"Here's my story. Besides, the Scriptures say, 'Confess yourselves one to another,' and I confess to you, D'Artagnan."

"And I give you absolution beforehand; you see I am good-natured."

"Do not jest with sacred things, my friend."

"Go on, then; I am listening."

"I had been at the seminary ever since I was nine years old; I lacked only three days of being twenty. I was expecting to be an abbé, and all was settled. One evening, when I had gone, according to my custom, to a house which I enjoyed frequenting, — when you are young, what can you expect? You are weak. An officer who saw me with a jealous eye, reading the 'Lives of the Saints' to the mistress of the house, entered suddenly, without being announced. That evening, as it happened, I had translated an episode of Judith, and had just communicated my verses to the lady, who was making me all sorts of compliments, and, leaning on my shoulder, was reading them a second time with me. Her attitude, which, I must admit, was rather free, wounded this gentleman's feelings. He said nothing, but when I went out he followed, and coming up to me:

"'Abbé,' said he, 'do you like canings?'

"'I cannot say, sir,' answered I; 'no one having ever dared to give me any.'

"'Well, listen to me then, abbé; if you venture again into the house where I met you this evening, I will dare.'

"I really think I must have been frightened. I became very pale, I felt my legs fail me. I sought a reply, but could find none — I was silent.

"The officer waited for my reply, and, seeing it so long

coming, he burst into a laugh, turned on his heel, and re entered the house. I returned to my seminary.

"I am a gentleman born, and my blood is hot, as you may have remarked, my dear D'Artagnan. The insult was terrible, and although it remained unknown to the rest of the world, I felt it live and fester at the bottom of my heart. I informed my superiors that I did not feel myself sufficiently prepared for ordination, and at my request the ceremony was postponed for a year.

"I sought out the best fencing-master in Paris. I made an agreement with him to take a lesson every day, and every day during a year I took that lesson. Then, on the anniversary of the day on which I had been insulted, I hung my cassock on a peg, assumed the costume of a cavalier, and went to a ball given by a lady friend of mine, and where I knew my man would be. It was in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, close to La Force.

"As I expected, my officer was there. I went up to him as he was singing a love ditty and looking tenderly at a lady, and interrupted him exactly in the middle of the second couplet.

"'Sir,' said I, 'does it still displease you that I should return to a certain house in Rue Payenne? And would you still give me a caning if I took it into my head to disobey you?'

"The officer looked at me with astonishment, and then said:

"'What is your business with me, sir? I do not know you.'

"'I am,' said I, 'the little abbé, who used to read the "Lives of the Saints," and translate Judith into verse.'

"'Ah, ha! I recollect now,' said the officer, in a jeering tone; 'well, what do you want with me?'

"'I should like you to spare the time to take a walk with me.'

"'To-morrow morning, if you like, and with the greatest pleasure.'

"'No, not to-morrow morning, but immediately, if you please.'

"'If you absolutely insist upon it—'

"'I do—I insist upon it.'

"'Come, then. Ladies,' said the officer, 'do not disturb yourselves. Allow me time simply to kill this gentleman, and I will return and finish the last couplet.'

"We went out. I took him to the Rue Payenne, to exactly the same spot where, a year before, at the very same hour, he had paid me the compliment I have related to you. It was a

superb moonlight night. We drew, and at the first pass I laid him stark dead."

"The devil!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Now," continued Aramis, "as the ladies did not see their singer come back, and as he was found in the Rue Payenne with a great sword-thrust through his body, it was supposed that I was the one who had accommodated him thus, and the matter created some scandal. So I was obliged to renounce the cassock for a time. Athos, whose acquaintance I made about that period, and Porthos, who had, in addition to my lessons, taught me some fine passes, prevailed upon me to solicit the uniform of a musketeer. The king entertained great regard for my father, who was killed at the siege of Arras, and the uniform was granted. You understand, then, that the moment has now come for me to reënter the bosom of the Church."

"And why now, rather than yesterday or to-morrow? What, then, has happened to you to-day which gives you such sorry ideas?"

"My wound, my dear D'Artagnan, has been a warning to me from Heaven."

"Your wound? Bah! it is nearly healed, and I am sure it is not that which at the present moment gives you the most pain."

"What wound?" asked Aramis, coloring.

"You have one in your heart, Aramis, deeper and more painful — a wound made by a woman."

The eye of Aramis kindled, in spite of himself.

"Ah," said he, dissembling his emotion under a feigned carelessness, "do not talk of such things. What! I think of such things! I have love-pangs? *Vanitas vanitatum!* According to your idea, then, my brain is turned! And for whom? — for some grisette, some chambermaid, whom I have courted in some garrison! Fie!"

"I crave your pardon, my dear Aramis, but I thought you aimed higher."

"Higher? And who am I, to nourish such ambition? — a poor musketeer, a beggar and unknown, who hates slavery, and finds himself out of place in the world."

"Aramis, Aramis!" cried D'Artagnan, looking at his friend with an air of doubt.

"Dust I am, and to dust I return. Life is full of humiliations and sorrows," continued he, becoming still more melancholy; "all the ties which attach it to happiness break one after

another in the hand of man, particularly the golden ties. Oh, my dear D'Artagnan," resumed Aramis, giving to his voice a slight tone of bitterness, "believe me, conceal your wounds when you have any. Silence is the last joy of the unhappy. Beware of giving any one the clue to your griefs. The curious suck our tears as flies suck the blood of a wounded hart."

"Alas! my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan, in his turn heaving a profound sigh, "that is my own history you are relating!"

"How?"

"Yes; a woman whom I love, whom I adore, has just been torn from me by force. I do not know where she is, or where she has been taken. Perhaps she is a prisoner, perhaps she is dead!"

"Yes, but you have at least this consolation, that you can say to yourself she has not quitted you voluntarily; that if you have no news of her, it is because all communication with you is forbidden; while —"

"While what?"

"Nothing," replied Aramis, "nothing."

"So you renounce the world, then, forever—that is a settled thing, a resolution fixed upon?"

"Forever! You are my friend to-day, to-morrow you will no longer exist for me. As for the world, it is a sepulchre, and nothing else."

"The devil! What you say is very sad."

"What can you expect? My vocation attracts me, it carries me away."

D'Artagnan smiled, but made no answer. Aramis continued:

"And yet, while I still belong to the earth, I should have liked to speak of you and of our friends."

"And on my part," said D'Artagnan, "I should have liked to speak of you, but I find you so completely detached from everything! Love you cry fie upon! friends are shadows! the world is a sepulchre!"

"Alas! you will find it so yourself," said Aramis, with a sigh.

"Well, then let us say no more about it," said D'Artagnan; "and let us burn this letter, which, no doubt, announces to you some fresh infidelity of your grisette or your chambermaid."

"What letter?" cried Aramis, eagerly.

"A letter which was sent to your rooms in your absence, and which was given to me for you."

"But whom is that letter from?"

"Oh! from some tearful waiting-maid, some despairing

grisette; from Madame de Chevreuse's chambermaid, perhaps, who must have been obliged to return to Tours with her mistress, and who, in order to make herself attractive, stole some perfumed paper, and sealed her letter with a duchess's coronet."

"What are you saying?"

"There! I really think I must have lost it," said the young man, mischievously, while pretending to search for it. "But fortunately the world is a sepulchre; men, and consequently women also, are only shadows, and love is a sentiment upon which you cry fie! fie!"

"D'Artagnan! D'Artagnan!" cried Aramis, "you are killing me!"

"At last, here it is!" said D'Artagnan. He drew the letter from his pocket.

Aramis sprang towards him, seized the letter, read it, or rather devoured it, his countenance absolutely beaming with delight.

"Your waiting-maid seems to have an agreeable style," said the carrier, carelessly.

"Thanks, D'Artagnan, thanks!" cried Aramis, almost in a state of delirium. "She was forced to return to Tours; she is not faithless; she still loves me! Come dear friend, come, let me embrace you; happiness stifles me!"

And the two friends began to dance round the venerable St. Chrysostom, kicking about famously the sheets of the thesis, which had fallen on the floor.

At that moment Bazin entered with the spinach and the omelette.

"Be off, you scoundrel!" cried Aramis, throwing his calotte into his face; "return to where you came from; take back those horrible vegetables, and that frightful side-dish! Order a larded hare, a fat capon, a leg of mutton with garlic, and four bottles of old Burgundy!"

Bazin, who looked at his master without comprehending the cause of this change, gloomily let the omelette slip into the spinach, and the spinach on to the floor.

"Now is the moment to consecrate your existence to the King of kings," said D'Artagnan, "if you persist in offering him a civility. *Non inutile desiderium in oblatione.*"

"Go to the devil with your Latin. Let us drink, my dear D'Artagnan! 's death! Let us drink while the wine is fresh, let us drink heartily, and tell me something about what is going on in the world yonder."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WIFE OF ATHOS.

"Now we still have to get news of Athos," said D'Artagnan to the vivacious Aramis, when he had informed him of all that had passed since their departure from the capital, and when a good dinner had made one of them forget his thesis and the other his fatigue.

"Do you think any harm can have happened to him?" asked Aramis. "Athos is so cool, so brave, and handles his sword so skilfully."

"There is no doubt of that; nobody has a higher opinion of the courage and skill of Athos than I have; but I like better to hear my sword clang against lances than against staves. I fear lest Athos has been carried down by a mob of menials; those fellows strike hard, and don't leave off in a hurry. This is my reason for wishing to set out again as soon as I possibly can."

"I will try to accompany you," said Aramis, "though I scarcely feel in a condition to mount on horseback. Yesterday I undertook to employ that scourge you see hanging on the wall, but pain prevented my continuing the pious exercise."

"This is the first time I ever heard of anybody trying to cure gunshot wounds with a cat-o'-nine-tails; but you were ill, and illness makes the head weak; therefore you may be excused."

"When do you set out?"

"To-morrow at daybreak. Sleep as soundly as you can to-night, and to-morrow, if you are well enough, we will start together."

"Till to-morrow, then," said Aramis; "for though you are made of iron you must need repose."

The next morning, when D'Artagnan entered Aramis's chamber, he found him standing at the window.

"What are you looking at there?" asked D'Artagnan.

"'Pon my word! I am admiring those three magnificent horses which the stable lads are leading about. It would be a pleasure worthy of a prince to travel on such horses."

"Well, my dear Aramis, you may enjoy that pleasure; for one of those horses is yours."

"Ah! bah! which of them?"

"Whichever of the three you like. I have no preference."

"And the rich caparison is mine too?"

"Certainly."

"You are laughing, D'Artagnan."

"No; I have left off laughing now that you speak French again."

"What, those gilded holsters, that velvet housing, that silver-mounted saddle are all mine?"

"Yours, and the horse that is pawing the ground is mine, and the other horse which is caracoling belongs to Athos."

"By Jove! they are three superb animals!"

"I am glad they please you."

"Was it the king who made you such a present?"

"Certainly it was not the cardinal; but don't trouble yourself about where they come from — be satisfied that one of them is your property."

"I choose the one which the red-headed boy is holding."

"Have it, then."

"Good heavens! That is enough to drive away all my remaining pains. I could ride on him with thirty balls in my body. On my soul, what handsome stirrups! Helloo! Bazin, come here this minute!"

Bazin made his appearance at the door, dull and spiritless.

"Polish my sword, press my hat, brush my cloak, and load my pistols!" said Aramis.

"That last order is useless," interrupted D'Artagnan; "there are loaded pistols in your holsters."

Bazin sighed.

"Come, Master Bazin, make yourself easy; people gain the kingdom of Heaven in all conditions of life."

"You were already such a good theologian," said Bazin, almost weeping; "you might have become a bishop, perhaps a cardinal."

"Well, but, my poor Bazin, reflect a little: of what use is it to be a churchman, pray? You do not avoid going to war by that means; you see the cardinal is about to make the next campaign, helm on head and partisan in hand. And what do you say of M. de Nogaret de La Valette? He is a cardinal likewise: ask his lackey how often he has had to prepare lint for him."

"Alas!" sighed Bazin, "I very well know, sir, everything is turned topsy-turvy in the world nowadays."

During this dialogue, the two young men and the poor lackey had gone down into the yard.

"Hold my stirrup, Bazin," cried Aramis.

And Aramis sprang into his saddle with his usual grace and lightness; but after a few vaults and curvets of the noble animal, his rider felt his pains come on so insupportably that he turned pale, and became unsteady in his seat. D'Artagnan, who, foreseeing such an event, had kept his eye on him, sprang toward him, caught him in his arms, and assisted him to his chamber.

"All right, my dear Aramis, take care of yourself," said he; "I will go alone in search of Athos."

"You are a man of bronze," replied Aramis.

"No, I have good luck, that is all; but how do you mean to pass your time till I come back? No more glosses on the fingers, or upon benedictions, hey?"

Aramis smiled. "I will make verses," said he.

"Yes; verses perfumed with the odor of the note from Madame de Chevreuse's serving-maid. Teach Bazin prosody then, that will console him. As to the horse, ride him a little every day, and that will accustom you to his movements."

"Oh! make yourself easy on that head," replied Aramis; "you will find me ready to follow you."

They took leave of each other, and ten minutes later, after commending his friend to the care of Bazin and the hostess, D'Artagnan was trotting along in the direction of Amiens.

How was he going to find Athos, and should he even find him at all? The position in which he had left him was critical; he might, very probably, have succumbed. This idea, while darkening his brow, drew several sighs from him, and caused him to formulate to himself a few vows of vengeance.

Of all his friends, Athos was the eldest, and consequently the least like him, apparently, in his tastes and sympathies.

Yet he entertained a marked preference for this gentleman. Athos's noble and distinguished air, the flashes of greatness which from time to time broke out from the shade in which he voluntarily kept himself, his unalterable equality of temper which made him the pleasantest companion in the world, his forced and bitter gayety, his bravery which might have been termed blind if it had not been the result of the rarest coolness, — all these qualities attracted more than D'Artagnan's esteem, more than his friendship: they attracted his admiration.

Indeed, when placed beside M. de Tréville, the elegant and noble courtier, Athos, in his days of good spirits, might advantageously sustain a comparison. He was of middle height, but his person was so admirably shaped and so well propor-

tioned, that more than once, in his struggles with Porthos, he had overcome the giant whose physical strength was proverbial among the musketeers. His head, with piercing eyes, a straight nose, a chin cut like that of Brutus, had altogether an indefinable character of grandeur and grace. His hands, of which he took no care at all, were the despair of Aramis, who cultivated his with a great deal of almond paste and perfumed oil. The sound of his voice was at once penetrating and melodious, and then what was indefinable in Athos, who was always modest and retiring, was his knowledge of the world, and of the usages of the most brilliant society, his high-bred manners, which appeared, as if unconsciously to himself, in his least actions.

If a repast were on foot, Athos presided over it better than any other man in society, placing every guest exactly in the rank which his ancestors had earned for him, or which he had made for himself. If a question in heraldry were started, Athos knew all the noble families of the kingdom, their genealogy, their alliances, their arms, and the origin of their arms. Etiquette had no details unknown to him; he knew what were the rights of the great land-owners; he was profoundly versed in venery and falconry, and had, one day, when conversing on this great art, astonished even Louis XIII. himself, who, nevertheless, had taken his master's degree in it.

Like all the great nobles of that period, he rode and fenced to perfection. But still further, his education had been so little neglected, even with respect to scholastic studies, so rare at this time among gentlemen, that he smiled at the scraps of Latin which Aramis sported, and which Porthos pretended to understand. Twice or thrice even, to the great astonishment of his friends, he had, when Aramis allowed some rudimentary error to escape him, replaced a verb in its right tense and a noun in its right case. Besides, his probity was irreproachable, in that age when soldiers so easily compromised with their religion and their consciences, lovers with the rigorous delicacy of our days, and the poor with God's seventh commandment. Athos, then, was a very extraordinary man.

And yet this nature so well bred, this creature so beautiful, this essence so fine, was seen to turn insensibly toward material life, as old men turn toward physical and moral imbecility. In his hours of privation — and such hours were frequent — the whole of the luminous portion of Athos was extinguished, and his brilliant side disappeared as if in profound eclipse.

Then, the demi-god having vanished, he remained almost less than a man. With head hanging down, dull eye, speech slow and painful, Athos would look for hours together at his bottle, his glass, or at Grimaud, who, accustomed to obey him by signs, read, in his master's faint glance, his least desire, and immediately satisfied it. If the four friends were together during one of these moods, a word, uttered occasionally with a violent effort, was the one share Athos furnished to the conversation. To make up for his silence, Athos alone drank enough for four, nor did he appear to be otherwise affected by wine than by a more marked contraction of the brow, and by a deeper sadness.

D'Artagnan, with whose inquisitive and penetrating disposition we are acquainted, whatever interest he might have in satisfying his curiosity on this subject, had not been able to assign any cause for these fits, or to note periods of their recurrence. Athos never received any letters, Athos never had concerns which were not known to all his friends.

It could not be said that wine produced this sadness, for, in truth, he only drank to combat this sadness, and the wine, as we have said, only rendered it still more gloomy. This excess of bilious humor could not be attributed to play, for, unlike Porthos, who accompanied the variations of chance with songs or oaths, Athos, when he had won, remained as impassive as when he had lost. He had been known, in the musketeers' club, to win one night a thousand pistoles, lose them even with his gold-embroidered gala-day belt to boot, gain it all back with the addition of a hundred louis, without his beautiful black eyebrows rising or falling half a line, without his hands losing their pearly hue, without his conversation, which was cheerful that evening, ceasing for a moment to be calm and agreeable.

Nor was it, as with our neighbors the English, an atmospheric influence that darkened his countenance, for his sadness generally became more intense toward the fine season of the year. June and July were Athos's terrible months.

For the present he had no care. He shrugged his shoulders when people spoke of the future. His secret, then, was in the past, as D'Artagnan had vaguely been told.

This mysterious shadow, spread over his whole person, rendered still more interesting the man whose eyes or mouth had never, even in the moments of the most complete intoxication, revealed anything, however skilfully questions had been put to him.

"Well," thought D'Artagnan, "poor Athos is perhaps at this moment dead, and dead through my fault, for I dragged him into this affair, the origin of which he did not know, the result of which he will not know, and from which he could derive no advantage."

"Without reckoning, sir," added Planchet, "that we probably owe our lives to him. Do you remember how he cried: 'Off, D'Artagnan! I am taken!' And when he had discharged his two pistols, what a terrible noise he made with his sword! One might have said that twenty men, or rather twenty mad devils, were fighting."

And these words redoubled D'Artagnan's eagerness, and he spurred on his horse, which stood in no need of any stimulus, but carried his master along at a gallop.

About eleven o'clock in the morning they perceived Amiens. At half-past eleven they were at the door of the cursed inn.

D'Artagnan had often meditated against the perfidious landlord one of those hearty revenges which are consoling even in the thought of them. He entered the hostelry with his hat pulled over his eyes, his left hand on the pommel of the sword, and cracking his whip with his right hand.

"Do you remember me?" said he to the landlord, who advanced, bowing, toward him.

"I have not that honor, monseigneur," replied the latter, his eyes still dazzled by the brilliant turnout with which D'Artagnan appeared.

"What! you don't know me?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Well, two words will refresh your memory. What have you done with that gentleman whom you had the audacity, about two weeks ago, to accuse of passing bad money?"

The host grew pale, for D'Artagnan had assumed the most threatening attitude, and Planchet had followed his master's example.

"Ah, monseigneur! do not mention it," cried the landlord, in the most piteous voice imaginable; "ah, seigneur, how dearly have I paid for my mistake! Unhappy wretch that I am!"

"I say, what has become of that gentleman?"

"Deign to listen to me, monseigneur, and be merciful! Sit down, I beg!"

D'Artagnan, mute with anger and uneasiness, sat down as threatening as a judge. Planchet stood fiercely at the back of his arm-chair.

"Here is the story, monseigneur," resumed the trembling landlord, "for I now recollect you. It was you who rode off at the moment I had that unfortunate difference with the gentleman you speak of."

"Yes, it was I; so you may plainly perceive that you have no mercy to expect if you do not tell me the whole truth."

"Then please listen to me, and you shall know it all."

"I am listening."

"I had been warned by the authorities that a celebrated counterfeiter would arrive at my inn with several of his companions, all disguised as guards or musketeers. I was furnished with a description of your horses, your lackeys, your countenances, — nothing was omitted."

"Go on! go on!" said D'Artagnan, who quickly recognized the source of such an exact description.

"In conformity with the orders of the authorities, who sent me a reinforcement of six men, I took then such measures as I thought necessary to get possession of the persons of the pretended counterfeiters."

"What, again!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, whose ears were terribly wounded by the repetition of this word counterfeiters.

"Pardon me, monseigneur, for saying such things, but they are really my excuse. The authorities had terrified me, and you know that a tavern-keeper must keep on good terms with the authorities."

"But, once again, where is the gentleman? What has become of him? is he dead? is he living?"

"Patience, monseigneur, we are coming to it. What you know about then happened, the outcome of which your precipitate departure," added the landlord with a shrewdness that did not escape D'Artagnan, "appeared to authorize. The gentleman, your friend, defended himself desperately. His lackey, who, by an unforeseen piece of ill-luck, had got up a quarrel with the police disguised as stable-lads —"

"Miserable scoundrel!" cried D'Artagnan, "you were all in the plot then! and I really don't know what prevents me from exterminating you all."

"Alas! monseigneur, we were not all in the plot, and you will soon see we were not. Your friend (I ask pardon for not calling him by the honorable name which no doubt he bears, but we do not know his name) — your friend, having disabled two men with his pistols, retreated fighting with his sword, with which he mutilated another one of my men, and stunned me with a blow of the flat side."

"Hangman! when will you come to the end?" cried D'Artagnan; "Athos, what has become of Athos?"

"While fighting and retreating, as I have told monseigneur, he found behind him the cellar stairs, and as the door was open he took possession of the key, and barricaded himself inside. As we were sure of finding him there, we let him alone."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan; "there wasn't any particular reason for killing him, it was enough to keep him a prisoner."

"Good God! a prisoner, monseigneur? Why, he imprisoned himself, upon my oath he did. Besides, he had made rough work of it. One man was killed on the spot, and two others were severely wounded. The dead man and the two who were wounded were carried off by their companions, and I have heard nothing of any of them since. As for myself, as soon as I recovered my senses I went to the governor, to whom I related all that had passed, and whom I asked what I should do with my prisoner. But the governor was thunderstruck. He told me he did not know at all what I meant, that the orders I had received did not come from him, and that if I had the misfortune to tell any one whatsoever that he was at all concerned in all this disturbance he would have me hanged. It appears that I had made a mistake, sir, that I had arrested the wrong person, and that he whom I ought to have arrested had escaped."

"But Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, whose impatience was increased by the abandoned state in which the authorities left the matter; "Athos! where is he?"

"As I was anxious to repair the wrongs I had done the prisoner," resumed the innkeeper, "I took my way straight to the cellar, in order to set him at liberty. Ah! sir, he was no longer a man, he was a devil! To my offer of liberty, he replied that it was nothing but a snare set for him, and that before he came out he intended to impose his own conditions. I told him very humbly — for I could not conceal from myself the scrape I had got into by laying hands on one of his Majesty's musketeers — I told him I was ready to submit to his conditions."

"'In the first place,' said he, 'I insist upon having my lackey handed over to me, fully armed.' We hastened to obey this order; for you will please to understand, sir, we were disposed to do everything your friend could desire. M. Grimaud (he told us his name, he did, although he does not talk much) — M. Grimaud, then, was sent down to the cellar, wounded as he was; then his master, having received him,

barricaded the door anew, and ordered us to remain in our shop."

"Well, but where is he now?" cried D'Artagnan. "Where is Athos?"

"In the cellar, sir."

"What! you wretch! What! you have kept him in the cellar all this time?"

"Merciful Heaven! No, sir! We keep him in the cellar! You do not know what he is up to in the cellar! Ah! if you could but persuade him to come out, sir, I should be grateful to you all my life; I should adore you as my patron saint!"

"Then he is there? I shall find him there?"

"Certainly you will, sir; he persists in remaining there. Every day we pass through the air-hole some bread at the end of a fork, and some meat when he asks for it; but, alas! it is not of bread and meat that he consumes the greatest quantity. I once endeavored to go down with two of my servants, but he flew into a terrible rage. I heard the noise he made in loading his pistols, and his servant in loading his musketoon. Then, when we asked them what were their intentions, the master replied that he had forty shots to fire, and that he and his lackey would fire them to the last one, before he would allow a single soul of us to set foot in the cellar. Upon this I went and complained to the governor, who replied that I only had what I deserved, and that it would teach me to insult honorable gentlemen who took up their abode in my house."

"So that from that time—" replied D'Artagnan, totally unable to refrain from laughing at the landlord's pitiable face.

"So that from that time, sir," continued the latter, "we have led the most miserable life imaginable. For you must know, sir, that all our provisions are in the cellar; there is our wine in bottles, and our wine in the butt; beer, oil, groceries, bacon, and large sausages; and as we are prevented from going down there, we are forced to refuse food and drink to the travellers who come to the house, so that our hostelry is daily going to rack and ruin. If your friend remains another week in my cellar, we shall be ruined."

"And that will be justice, you rascal! Could you not perceive by our appearance that we are people of quality, and not counterfeiters,—say?"

"Yes, sir, yes, you are right," said the landlord. "But, hark! hark! there he is in a passion again!"

"Somebody has disturbed him, no doubt," said D'Artagnan.

"But he must be disturbed," cried the landlord; "here are two English gentlemen just arrived."

"Well?"

"Well, the English like good wine, as you know, sir; these have asked for my best. My wife, then, must have asked M. Athos to let her go into the cellar to satisfy these gentlemen, and he, as usual, must have refused. Ah! good heavens! there is the hullabaloo louder than ever!"

D'Artagnan, in fact, heard a great noise in the direction of the cellar. He rose, and, preceded by the landlord, who was wringing his hands, and followed by Planchet with his musketoon all loaded, he approached the scene of action.

The two gentlemen were exasperated; they had had a long ride, and were desperately hungry and thirsty.

"But this is a tyranny," cried they, in very good French, though with a foreign accent; "that this madman will not allow these good people access to their own wine! Come! we will break open the door, and if he is too far gone in his madness — well, we will kill him!"

"Softly, gentlemen!" said D'Artagnan, drawing his pistols from his belt; "you will kill no one, if you please!"

"Good! good!" said Athos, calmly, from the other side of the door; "just let them come in, these devourers of little children, and we shall see!"

Brave as they appeared to be, the two English gentlemen looked at each other hesitatingly. One would have said that there was in that cellar one of those hungry ogres, the gigantic heroes of popular legends, into whose cavern nobody can force a way with impunity.

There was a moment of silence; but at length the two Englishmen felt ashamed to draw back, and the more quarrelsome one descended the five or six steps which led to the cellar, and gave the door a kick hard enough to split a wall.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, cocking his pistols, "I will take charge of the one at the top: you look to the one below. Now, gentlemen, if it's battle you want, you shall have it."

"My God!" cried the hollow voice of Athos, "I can hear D'Artagnan, I think."

"Yes!" cried D'Artagnan, raising his voice in his turn, "I am here, my friend!"

"Ah! ah! then," replied Athos, "we will give it to these breakers-in of doors!"

The gentlemen had drawn their swords, but they found themselves caught between two fires. They still hesitated an

instant; but, as before, pride prevailed, and a second kick split the door from bottom to top.

"Stand one side, D'Artagnan, stand one side," cried Athos; "I am going to fire!"

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, whose presence of mind never abandoned him, "gentlemen, think of what you are about!—Patience, Athos!—You are running your heads into a very silly affair; you will be riddled. My lackey and I will have three shots at you, and you will get as many from the cellar. We will then have our swords, with which, I can assure you, my friend and I play tolerably well. Let me manage your business and my own. You shall soon have something to drink; I give you my word."

"If there is any left!" grumbled Athos's jeering voice.

The landlord felt a cold sweat creep down his back.

"How! if there is any left!" murmured he.

"What, the devil! there must be plenty left," replied D'Artagnan; "be satisfied of that. These two can never have drunk up the whole cellar. Gentlemen, return your swords to their scabbards."

"We will, provided you replace your pistols in your belt."

"Willingly."

And D'Artagnan set the example. Then turning towards Planchet, he made him a sign to uncock his musketoon.

The Englishmen, convinced, sheathed their swords grumblingly. The history of Athos's imprisonment was then related to them; and as they were really gentlemen, they pronounced the host in the wrong.

"Now, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "go up to your room again; and in ten minutes, I will answer for it, you shall have all you desire."

The Englishmen bowed, and went upstairs.

"Now I am alone, my dear Athos," said D'Artagnan, "open the door, I beg of you."

"Instantly," said Athos.

Then a great noise of the knocking down of fagots was heard, and of the groaning of beams; these were Athos's counterscarps and bastions which the besieged himself was demolishing.

An instant later the door moved, and the pale face of Athos appeared, who with a rapid glance took a survey of the situation.

D'Artagnan fell on his neck and embraced him tenderly; he then endeavored to draw him from that moist abode, but, to his surprise, perceived that Athos staggered.

"NOW, GENTLEMEN, IF IT'S BATTLE YOU WANT, YOU SHALL HAVE IT."—p. 269.

"Why, you are wounded?" said he.

"I! not at all. I am dead drunk, that's all, and never did a man do it better. Gracious heavens! my good host! I must at least have drunk for my part a hundred and fifty bottles."

"Mercy on us!" cried the landlord; "if the lackey has drunk only half as much as the master, I am a ruined man."

"Grimaud is a well-bred lackey. He would never think of faring in the same way as his master. He only drank from the butt. Hark! I believe he forgot to turn the faucet in again. Do you hear it? It is running now."

D'Artagnan burst into a loud laugh, which changed the landlord's trembling into a burning fever.

In the meantime, Grimaud appeared in his turn, behind his master, with his musketoon on his shoulder, and his head shaking like one of those drunken satyrs in Rubens's pictures. He was bedewed before and behind with a thick liquid which the host recognized as his best olive oil.

The party crossed the public room and proceeded to take possession of the best apartment in the house, which D'Artagnan seized arbitrarily.

In the meantime the landlord and his wife hurried down with lamps into the cellar, which had so long been forbidden them, and where a frightful spectacle awaited them.

Beyond the fortifications, through which Athos had made a breach in order to get out, and which were composed of fagots, planks, and empty casks, heaped up according to all the rules of the strategic art, they found, swimming in puddles of oil and wine, the bones and fragments of all the hams they had eaten; while a heap of broken bottles filled the whole left-hand corner of the cellar, and a keg, the cock of which was left running, was losing through the opening the last drops of its blood. "The image of devastation and death," as the ancient poet says, "reigned as over a field of battle."

Of fifty large sausages, that had been suspended from the joists, scarcely ten remained.

Then the lamentations of the landlord and landlady pierced the vault of the cellar. D'Artagnan himself was moved by them. Athos did not even turn his head.

But rage succeeded grief. The landlord armed himself with a spit, and in his despair rushed into the chamber occupied by the two friends.

"Wine!" said Athos, on perceiving the host.

"Wine!" cried the stupefied landlord, "wine! Why, you

have drunk more than a hundred pistoles' worth!—I am a ruined man—lost! destroyed!"

"Bah!" said Athos. "Why, we always stopped thirsty."

"If you had been contented with drinking, why, well and good; but you have broken all the bottles."

"You pushed me upon a heap which rolled down. That was your fault."

"All my oil is lost!"

"Oil is a sovereign balm for wounds, and my poor Grimaud here was obliged to dress those you had inflicted on him."

"All my sausages gnawed!"

"There is an enormous number of rats in that cellar."

"You shall pay me for all this," cried the exasperated host.

"You triple ass!" said Athos, rising; but he sank down again immediately; he had tried his strength to the utmost. D'Artagnan came to his relief, with his whip raised in the air.

The landlord drew back and burst into tears.

"This will teach you," said D'Artagnan, "to treat more courteously the guests God sends you."

"God! say rather the devil!"

"My dear friend," said D'Artagnan, "if you keep stunning us in this manner, we will all four go and shut ourselves up in your cellar, and see if the mischief be as great as you say."

"Oh! gentlemen! gentlemen!" said the landlord, "I have been wrong, I confess it; but there is pardon for every sin! You are noblemen and I am a poor innkeeper; you will have pity on me."

"Ah! if you speak in that way," said Athos, "you will break my heart, and the tears will flow from my eyes as the wine flowed from your casks. We are not such devils as we appear to be. Come here and let us talk the matter over."

The landlord approached hesitatingly.

"Come here, I say, and don't be afraid," continued Athos. "At the moment when I was about to pay you, I had laid my purse on your table."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"That purse contained sixty pistoles. Where is it?"

"Deposited in the justice's office. They said it was counterfeit money."

"Very well; get me my purse back and keep the sixty pistoles."

"But monseigneur knows very well that justice never lets go what it once lays hold of. If it were counterfeit money,

there might be some hopes; but unfortunately they are good pieces."

"Manage the matter as well as you can, my good man. It does not concern me, the more so as I have not a pound left."

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "where is Athos's former horse?"

"In the stable."

"How much is it worth?"

"Fifty pistoles at most."

"It's worth eighty; take it and let that end the matter."

"What!" cried Athos, "are you selling my horse? selling my Bajazet? And pray on what shall I make my campaign? on Grimaud?"

"I have brought you another," said D'Artagnan.

"Another?"

"And a magnificent one, too!" cried the landlord.

"Well, since there is another finer and younger, why, you may take the old one and let us have some wine."

"What kind?" asked the landlord, quite cheerful again.

"Some of that at the bottom, near the laths. There are twenty-five bottles of it left; all the rest were broken by my fall. Bring up six of them."

"Why, this man is a tun!" said the host aside; "if he will only remain here a fortnight, and pay for what he drinks, my affairs will soon be right again."

"And don't forget," said D'Artagnan, "to bring up four bottles of the same sort for the two English gentlemen."

"And now, D'Artagnan," said Athos, "while they are bringing up the wine, tell me what has become of the others, come!"

D'Artagnan related how he had found Porthos in bed with a sprained knee, and Aramis at a table between two theologians. As he finished, the landlord entered with the wine and a ham, which, fortunately for him, had been left out of the cellar.

"Good!" said Athos, filling his glass and D'Artagnan's; "here's to Porthos and Aramis! But, my friend, what is the matter with you, and what has happened to you personally? You don't look happy."

"Alas!" said D'Artagnan, "it is because I am the most unfortunate of all."

"You! unfortunate!" said Athos; "come! how the devil can you be unfortunate? Tell me that."

"Presently!" said D'Artagnan.

"Presently! and why presently? Because you think I am

drunk, D'Artagnan? Keep this in mind, my ideas are never so clear as when I have had plenty of wine. Speak, then; I am all ears."

D'Artagnan related his adventure with Madame Bonacieux. Athos listened to him without moving a muscle; and when he had finished,—

"Trifles, all that," said Athos, "nothing but trifles!" That was Athos's favorite expression.

"You always say trifles, my dear Athos!" said D'Artagnan, "and that comes very ill from you, who have never been in love."

Athos's dull eye flashed suddenly, but it was only a flash—it became dull and vacant as before.

"True," said he quietly, "I have never been in love."

"Acknowledge then, you stony-hearted man," said D'Artagnan, "that you have no right to be so hard on us whose hearts are tender."

"Tender hearts! wounded hearts!" said Athos.

"What do you say?"

"I say that love is a lottery, in which he who wins, wins death! You are very fortunate to have lost, believe me, my dear D'Artagnan. And if I may be allowed to advise you, always lose."

"Oh! but she seemed to love me so!"

"She seemed, did she?"

"Oh! she did love me."

"You boy! Why, not a man lives who has not believed as you do, that his mistress loved him, and no man lives who has not been deceived by his mistress."

"Except you, Athos, who never had one."

"True," said Athos, after a moment's silence, "true! I never had one! Let us drink!"

"But then, philosopher that you are," said D'Artagnan, "instruct me, support me. I need to know and to be consoled."

"Consoled! for what?"

"For my misfortune."

"Your misfortune is laughable," said Athos, shrugging his shoulders; "I should like to know what you would say if I were to relate to you a real tale of love!"

"Which concerns you?"

"Or one of my friends — what difference does it make?"

"Tell it, Athos, tell it."

"Let us drink! That will be better."

"Drink while you tell it!"

"Not a bad idea!" said Athos, emptying and filling his glass; "the two things go marvellously well together."

"I am all attention," said D'Artagnan.

Athos collected himself, and in proportion as he did so, D'Artagnan saw that he became paler. He was at that period of intoxication in which vulgar drinkers fall on the floor and go to sleep. But he dreamed aloud, without sleeping. This somnambulism of drunkenness had something frightful about it.

"You absolutely wish it?" asked he.

"I beg you to do it," said D'Artagnan.

"Be it, then, as you desire. A friend of mine, please to observe, a friend of mine, not myself," said Athos, interrupting himself with a gloomy smile, "one of the counts of my province, that is to say, of Berry, noble as a Dandolo or a Montmorency, when he was twenty-five years old, fell in love with a girl of sixteen, beautiful as an angel. Through the ingenuousness of her age beamed an ardent mind, not a woman's mind, but a poet's. She did not please, she intoxicated. She lived in a small town with her brother, who was a vicar. Both had recently come into the country. Nobody knew where they came from; but on seeing her so lovely and her brother so pious, nobody thought of asking where they came from. They were said, however, to be of good extraction. My friend, who was lord of the country, might have seduced her, or he might have seized her forcibly, at his will, for he was master. Who would have come to the assistance of two strangers, two unknown persons? Unfortunately, he was an honorable man — he married her. The fool! the ass! the idiot!"

"How so, if he loved her?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Wait!" said Athos. "He took her to his château, and made her the first lady in the province; and, in justice, it must be allowed, she supported her rank becomingly."

"Well?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Well, one day when she was hunting with her husband," continued Athos, in a low voice, and speaking very quickly, "she fell from her horse and fainted. The count flew to her help, and as she appeared to be oppressed by her clothes, he ripped them open with his poniard, and in so doing laid bare her shoulder. Guess, D'Artagnan," said Athos, with a loud burst of laughter, "guess what she had on her shoulder."

"How can I tell?" said D'Artagnan.

"A fleur-de-lis!" said Athos. "She was branded!"

And Athos emptied at a single draught the glass he held in his hand.

"Horrors!" cried D'Artagnan. "What are you telling me?"

"The truth. My friend, the angel was a demon. The poor young girl had been a thief."

"And what did the count do?"

"The count was a great noble. He had on his estates the right of life and death. He tore the countess's dress to pieces, tied her hands behind her, and hanged her on a tree!"

"Heavens! Athos! a murder!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Yes, a murder — nothing else," said Athos, pale as death. "But, methinks I am left without wine!" and he seized by the neck the last bottle that remained, put it to his mouth, and emptied it at a single draught, as he would have emptied an ordinary glass.

Then he let his head fall on his two hands, while D'Artagnan sat facing him, overwhelmed with dismay.

"That has cured me of beautiful, poetical, and loving women," said Athos, getting to his feet, and neglecting to pursue the apologue of the count, "God grant you as much! Let us drink!"

"Then she is dead?" stammered D'Artagnan.

"Zounds!" said Athos. "But hold out your glass. Some ham, my man!" cried Athos; "we can drink no longer!"

"And her brother?" added D'Artagnan timidly.

"Her brother?" replied Athos.

"Yes, the priest."

"Oh! I inquired after him for the purpose of hanging him likewise, but he was beforehand with me, he had quitted the curacy instantly."

"Was it ever known who this miserable fellow was?"

"He was doubtless the fair lady's first lover and accomplice, a worthy man, who had pretended to be a curate for the purpose of getting his mistress married, and securing her a position. He has been quartered before this time, I hope."

"My God! my God!" cried D'Artagnan, quite stunned by the relation of this horrible adventure.

"Pray eat some of this ham, D'Artagnan; it is exquisite," said Athos, cutting a slice, which he placed on the young man's plate. "What a pity it is there are only four like this in the cellar! I should have drunk fifty bottles more."

D'Artagnan could no longer endure this conversation, which

would have driven him crazy. He let his head fall on his hands and pretended to go to sleep.

"Young men no longer know how to drink," said Athos, looking at him pityingly, "and yet this is one of the best of them, too!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RETURN.

D'Artagnan was astounded by the terrible story Athos had confided to him, and yet many things still appeared obscure to him in this partial revelation. In the first place, it had been made by a man decidedly drunk, to one who was half drunk; and yet, in spite of the uncertainty which the fumes of three or four bottles of Burgundy carry with them to the brain, D'Artagnan, on awaking the following morning, found every word of Athos as vividly written on his brain as if, when they had fallen from his mouth, they had, in fact, been imprinted on his mind. All this doubt only gave rise to a more lively desire of arriving at a certainty, and he went into his friend's chamber with a fixed determination of renewing the conversation of the preceding evening; but he found Athos quite himself again, that is to say, the most shrewd and impenetrable of men. Besides, the musketeer, after having exchanged a hearty shake of the hand with him, broached the matter first.

"I was pretty drunk yesterday, my dear D'Artagnan," said he; "I can tell that by my tongue, which was still very thick this morning, and by my pulse, which was still very tremulous. I would lay a wager I uttered a thousand absurdities."

And while saying this he looked at his friend with an earnestness that embarrassed him.

"No," replied D'Artagnan, "if I recollect well what you said, it was nothing out of the common."

"Indeed, you surprise me. I thought I had related a most lamentable story to you."

And he looked at the young man as if he would like to read to the very depths of his heart.

"'Pon my word," said D'Artagnan, "it appears that I was drunker than you, since I remember nothing of the kind."

But this did not satisfy Athos, who went on:

"You cannot have failed to remark, my dear friend, that every one has his own kind of drunkenness, sad or gay. My

drunkenness is always sad, and when I am thoroughly intoxicated my mania is to relate all the dismal stories with which my foolish nurse filled my brain. That is my failing — a great failing, I admit; but, with that exception, I am a sound drinker."

Athos said this so naturally that D'Artagnan was shaken in his conviction.

"Oh! that was it, then," replied the young man, trying to get at the truth, "that was it, then; I remember, as we remember a dream, — we were speaking of hanging people."

"Ah! you see how it is," said Athos, turning pale, but yet attempting to laugh; "I was sure it was so — the hanging of people is my nightmare."

"Yes, yes," replied D'Artagnan, "I remember now; yes, it was about — stop a minute — yes, it was about a woman."

"That's it," replied Athos, becoming almost livid, "that is my great story of the fair lady; and when I relate that, I must be drunk indeed."

"Yes, that was it," said D'Artagnan; "the story of a lady, tall, fair, and beautiful, with blue eyes."

"Yes — who was hanged."

"By her husband, who was a nobleman of your acquaintance," continued D'Artagnan, looking intently at Athos.

"Well, you see how a man may compromise himself when he does not know what he says," replied Athos, shrugging his shoulders as if he thought himself an object of pity. "I certainly never will get drunk again, D'Artagnan, — it is too bad a habit."

D'Artagnan remained silent.

Then Athos, changing the conversation all at once —

"By the bye, I thank you for the horse you have brought me," said he.

"Does it suit you?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes; but it is not a horse for hard work."

"You are mistaken. I have ridden him ten leagues in less than an hour and a half, and he appeared no more distressed than if he had only made the tour of the Place Saint Sulpice."

"Ah, ha! you begin to awaken my regret."

"Regret?"

"Yes; I have parted with him."

"How?"

"Why, here is a simple fact. This morning I awoke at six o'clock; you were still fast asleep, and I did not know what to

do with myself. I was still stupid from our yesterday's revel. As I came into the public room, I saw one of our Englishmen bargaining with a dealer for a horse, his own having died yesterday from blind staggers. I drew near, and found he was bidding a hundred pistoles for a chestnut nag.

"'Zounds!' said I; 'my good gentleman, I have a horse to sell, too.'

"'Ay, and a very fine one! I saw him yesterday — your friend's lackey was leading him.'

"'Do you think he is worth a hundred pistoles?'

"'Yes; will you sell him to me for that sum?'

"'No; but I will gamble with you for him.'

"'You will gamble with me for him?'

"'Yes.'

"'What with?'

"'Dice.'

"No sooner said than done, and I lost the horse. Ah, ah! but please to observe I won back the trappings," cried Athos.

D'Artagnan looked much disconcerted.

"This vexes you?" said Athos.

"Well, I must confess it does," replied D'Artagnan. "That horse was to have assisted in making us known in the day of battle. It was a pledge — a remembrance. Athos, you have done wrong."

"But, my dear friend, put yourself in my place," replied the musketeer. "I was bored to death, and then, upon my honor, I don't like English horses. If it is only a question of being recognized by some one, why, the saddle will suffice for that; it is quite remarkable enough. As to the horse, we can easily find some excuse for its disappearance. What the devil! A horse is mortal; let us play mine had the glanders or the farcy."

D'Artagnan remained gloomy.

"It vexes me greatly," continued Athos, "that you attach so much importance to these animals, for I am not yet at the end of my story."

"What else have you done?"

"After losing my own horse, nine against ten, -- see how near! — the notion occurred to me of staking yours."

"Yes — but you stopped at the notion, I hope?"

"No; for I put it in execution that very minute."

"That's too much!" said D'Artagnan, in great anxiety.

"I threw, and I lost."

"What, my horse?"

"Your horse; seven against eight; one point short—you know the proverb."

"Athos, you are not in your right senses—I swear you are not."

"My dear lad, you ought to have told me that yesterday, when I was telling you silly stories, and not this morning. I lost him, then, with all his appointments and harnesses."

"Really, this is frightful!"

"Stop a minute; you don't know all yet. I should make an excellent gambler if I were not too obstinate. But I get obstinate, just as when I drink; well, I got obstinate then—"

"Well, but what else could you play for—you had nothing left?"

"Oh! yes, yes, my friend; there was still that diamond left which sparkles on your finger, and which I had observed yesterday."

"This diamond!" said D'Artagnan, placing his hand eagerly on his ring.

"And as I am a connoisseur in such things, having had a few of my own once, I estimated it at a thousand pistoles."

"I hope," said D'Artagnan seriously, half dead with fright, "you made no mention of my diamond?"

"On the contrary, my dear friend, your diamond became our only resource; with it I might regain our horses and their outfit, and, still further, money to pay our expenses on the road."

"Athos, you make me tremble!" cried D'Artagnan.

"I mentioned your diamond then to my adversary, who had likewise noticed it. What the devil! do you think you can wear a star from heaven on your finger and nobody observe it? Impossible!"

"Oh! go on, go on!" said D'Artagnan; "for, on my honor, you will kill me with your coolness!"

"So we divided your diamond into ten parts, of a hundred pistoles each."

"You are laughing at me, and want to try me!" said D'Artagnan, whom anger began to take by the hair, as Minerva takes Achilles, in the "Iliad."

"No, I am not joking; 's death! I should like to have seen you in my place! I had been a fortnight without seeing a human face, and had been left to grow besotted in the company of bottles."

"That was no reason for staking my diamond!" replied D'Artagnan, doubling his fist with a nervous spasm.

"But hear the end. Ten throws of a hundred pistoles each

— ten throws, without revenge; in thirteen throws I lost all— in thirteen throws. The number thirteen was always fatal to me; it was on the 13th of July that — "

"Great heavens!" cried D'Artagnan, rising from the table, that day's story making him forget that of the preceding one.

"Patience!" said Athos; "I had a plan. The Englishman was an original character. I had seen him conversing that morning with Grimaud, and Grimaud had told me that he made him proposals to enter his service. I staked Grimaud — the silent Grimaud — divided into ten portions."

"Well, what next?" said D'Artagnan, laughing in spite of himself.

"Grimaud, himself, understand! and with the ten parts of Grimaud, who is not worth a ducatoon, I won back the diamond. Tell me, now, whether you don't think persistence is a virtue?"

"'Pon my word, but this is a droll story!" cried D'Artagnan, a little consoled, and holding his sides from laughter.

"You may easily guess that, finding the luck turned, I again staked the diamond at once."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, growing sober again.

"I won back your trappings, then your horse, then my trappings, then my horse, and then I lost again. In short, I regained your trappings and then mine. That's where we left off. That was a superb throw, so I left off there."

D'Artagnan breathed as if the whole hostelry had been removed from his breast.

"Then I understand," said he, timidly, "the diamond is safe?"

"Intact, my dear friend; plus the trappings of your Bucephalus and mine."

"But what shall we do without horses?"

"I have an idea concerning them."

"Athos, you keep me in a fever."

"Listen to me. You have not played for a long time, D'Artagnan."

"Neither have I any inclination to play."

"Swear to nothing. You have not played for a long time, I said. You ought, then, to have good luck."

"Well, what then?"

"Well! the Englishman and his companion are still here. I remarked that he regretted the trappings very much. You appear to think much of your horse. In your place, now, I would stake the harness against the horse."

"But he will not be satisfied with one equipment."

"Stake both, by Jove! I am not selfish if you are."

"You would do so?" said D'Artagnan, undecided, so strongly did the confidence of Athos begin to overcome him unconsciously.

"On my honor, in one single throw."

"But having lost the horses, I am particularly anxious to preserve the trappings."

"Stake your diamond, then!"

"No, thank you! That's quite another thing. Never! never!"

"The devil!" said Athos. "I would propose to you to stake Planchet, but as that has already been done, the Englishman would not, perhaps, be willing."

"Decidedly, my dear Athos, I prefer not to risk anything."

"That's a pity," said Athos, coolly; "the Englishman is overflowing with pistoles. Good Lord! try one throw. One throw is soon thrown!"

"And if I lose?"

"You will win."

"But if I lose?"

"Well, you will surrender the trappings."

"Well, one throw it is," said D'Artagnan.

"Athos went in search of the Englishman, and found him in the stable, examining the trappings with a greedy eye. The opportunity was good. He proposed the conditions — the two trappings against one horse, or a hundred pistoles, to choose. The Englishman quickly calculated. The two trappings were worth three hundred pistoles by themselves. He consented.

"D'Artagnan threw the dice with a trembling hand, and turned up the number three. His paleness terrified Athos, who, however, contented himself with saying:

"That's a sorry throw, comrade. You will have the horses fully equipped, sir."

The Englishman, quite triumphant, did not even give himself the trouble to shake the dice; he threw them on the table without looking at them, so sure was he of victory. D'Artagnan had turned away to conceal his vexation.

"There! there! there!" said Athos, in his tranquil voice; "that throw of the dice is extraordinary. I have seen it only four times in my life. Two aces, gentlemen!"

The Englishman looked, and was filled with astonishment D'Artagnan looked, and was filled with pleasure.

"Yes," continued Athos, "four times only: once at M.

Créquy's; another time at my own house in the country, in my château at ——, when I had a château; a third time at M. de Tréville's, where it surprised us all; and the fourth time at a tavern, where it fell to my lot, and where I lost a hundred louis and a supper on it."

"Then the gentleman takes his horse back again," said the Englishman.

"Certainly," said D'Artagnan.

"Then there is no revenge?"

"Our conditions said no revenge, you will please to recollect."

"That is true; the horse shall be restored to your lackey, sir."

"A moment!" said Athos; "with your permission, sir, I wish to speak a word with my friend."

"If you please."

Athos drew D'Artagnan on one side.

"Well, tempter! what more do you want of me?" said D'Artagnan; "you want me to throw again, do you not?"

"No; I wish you to reflect."

"On what?"

"You mean to take your horse, do you not?"

"Without doubt, I do."

"You are wrong, then. I would take the hundred pistoles; you know you have staked the trappings against the horse or a hundred pistoles, at your choice."

"Yes."

"I would take the hundred pistoles."

"And I take the horse."

"In which, I repeat, you are wrong. What is the use of one horse for us two? I could not get up behind. We should look like the two sons of Aymon, who lost their brothers. You would not want to humiliate me by riding by my side, prancing along upon that magnificent charger. For my part, I should not hesitate a moment, but take the hundred pistoles. We want money to carry us back to Paris."

"I am much attached to that horse, Athos."

"And there, again, you are wrong. A horse gets a sprain, a horse stumbles and breaks his knees, a horse eats out of a manger in which a glandered horse has eaten. There is a horse, or rather a hundred pistoles, lost. A master must feed his horse, while, on the contrary, the hundred pistoles feed their master."

"But how shall we get back to Paris?"

"Upon our lackeys' horses, by Jove! Everybody will see by our looks that we are people of condition."

Very pretty figures we shall cut upon ponies, while Aramis and Porthos will be caracoling upon their war steeds!"

"Aramis and Porthos!" cried Athos, and he began to laugh.

"What is it?" asked D'Artagnan, who did not at all comprehend his friend's hilarity.

"It's all right. Come on!" said Athos.

"Your advice then is —"

"To take the hundred pistoles, D'Artagnan; with the hundred pistoles we can live well to the end of the month. We have undergone a great deal of fatigue, remember, and a little rest will do us no harm."

"I rest! Oh, no, Athos! The moment I am in Paris I shall set about looking for that poor woman."

"Well, you may be assured that your horse will not be half so serviceable to you for that purpose as good *louis d'or*. Take the hundred pistoles, my friend, take the hundred pistoles!"

D'Artagnan only required one reason to be satisfied. This last reason appeared convincing. Besides, he feared that by resisting longer he should appear selfish in the eyes of Athos. He acquiesced, then, and chose the hundred pistoles, which the Englishman immediately paid down.

Their only anxiety now was to depart. Peace signed with the landlord cost six pistoles in addition to Athos's old horse D'Artagnan and Athos took the nags of Planchet and Grimaud, and the two lackeys started on foot, carrying the saddles on their heads.

Badly as our two friends were mounted, they soon got far in advance of their servants, and arrived at Crèvecœur. From a distance they perceived Aramis, seated in a melancholy manner at his window, looking out, like Sister Anne, at the dust in the horizon.

"Hello! ha! Aramis! what the devil are you doing there?" cried the two friends.

"Ah! it is you, D'Artagnan, and you, Athos," said the young man. "I was reflecting upon the rapidity with which the blessings of this world leave us, and my English horse, which has just disappeared amid a cloud of dust, has furnished me with a living image of the fragility of the things of the earth. Life itself may be resolved into three words: *Erat, est, fuit.*"

"Which means —" said D'Artagnan, who began to suspect the truth.

"Which means that I have just been duped; sixty louis for a horse which, by his gait, can trot at least five leagues an hour."

D'Artagnan and Athos burst into a loud laugh.

"My dear D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "don't be too angry with me, I beg of you, — necessity has no law. Besides, I am the person punished, as that rascally horse-dealer has robbed me of fifty pistoles at least. Ah! you fellows are good managers! You ride on your lackeys' horses, and have your own gallant steeds led along carefully by hand, in short stages."

At the same instant a market-cart, which some minutes before had appeared upon the Amiens road, pulled up at the inn, and Planchet and Grimaud got out of it with the saddles on their heads. The cart was returning to Paris empty, and the two lackeys had agreed as the condition of their transportation to keep the driver in liquor the whole way.

"What's this?" said Aramis, on seeing what was going on; "nothing but the saddles?"

"Now, do you understand?" said Athos.

"My friends, that is exactly my case. I retained my trappings instinctively. Hello, Bazin. Bring my new harness, and carry it with those of these gentlemen."

"And what have you done with your curates?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Why, I invited them to a dinner the next day," replied Aramis. "They have some capital wine here, by the way. I made them drunk; then the vicar forbade me to quit my uniform, and the Jesuit entreated me to get him made a musketeer."

"Without a thesis!" cried D'Artagnan, "without a thesis! For my part, I request the thesis may be suppressed!"

"From that time," continued Aramis, "I have lived very agreeably. I have begun a poem in verses of one syllable! That is rather difficult, but merit in all things consists in the difficulty. The matter is high-flown. I will read the first canto to you; it has four hundred verses, and lasts a minute."

"'Pon my word, my dear Aramis!" said D'Artagnan, who detested verses almost as much as he did Latin; "add to the merit of difficulty that of brevity, and you are sure your poem will at least have two merits."

"Then," continued Aramis, "it breathes irreproachable passion, as you will see. And so, my friends, we are returning, then, to Paris? Bravo! I am ready. We are going, then, to rejoin our good Porthos! So much the better. You don't believe that he will fail me, the great simpleton! He would not sell his

horse — not for a kingdom! I think I can see him now, mounted upon his animal and seated in his saddle. He will look like the Great Mogul!"

They made a halt for an hour, to refresh their horses. Aramis discharged his bill, placed Bazin in the cart with his comrades, and then set forward to join Porthos.

They found him up, not so pale as when D'Artagnan left him, and seated at a table, on which, though he was alone, was spread dinner enough for four persons. This dinner consisted of meats nicely dressed, choice wines, and superb fruit.

"Ah, by Jove!" said he, rising, "you came in the nick of time. Gentlemen, I was just at the soup, and you will dine with me."

"Oh, ho!" said D'Artagnan; "these bottles are not the fruits of Mousqueton's lasso! Besides, here is a larded veal and a fillet of beef."

"I am getting back my strength," said Porthos, "I am recruiting myself; nothing weakens a man more than these cursed sprains. Did you ever suffer from a sprain, Athos?"

"Never! — only I remember that in our affair of the Rue Férou I received a sword-wound, which at the end of fifteen or eighteen days produced exactly the same effect."

"But this dinner was not intended for you alone, my dear Porthos?" said Aramis.

"No," said Porthos, "I expected some gentlemen of the neighborhood, who have just sent me word they could not come. You will take their places, and I shall not lose by the exchange. Hello, Mousqueton! — chairs, and order the number of bottles to be doubled."

"Do you know what we are eating here?" said Athos, at the expiration of about ten minutes.

"Zounds!" replied D'Artagnan, "for my part I am eating larded veal with cardoons and marrow."

"And I some lamb fillets," said Porthos.

"And I a breast of fowl," said Aramis.

"You are all mistaken, gentlemen," answered Athos, with a serious countenance; "you are all eating horse."

"Eating what?" said D'Artagnan.

"Horse!" said Aramis, with a look of disgust.

Porthos alone made no reply.

"Yes, real horse; are we not, Porthos, eating horse? and perhaps his trappings."

"No, no, gentlemen, I have kept the trappings," said Porthos.

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"'Pon my word!" said Aramis, "we are all alike. One would think we tipped one another the wink."

"What could I do?" said Porthos; "this horse made my visitors ashamed of theirs, and I didn't like to humiliate them!"

"So your duchess is still taking the waters, is she?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, still," replied Porthos. "And the governor of the province, one of the gentlemen I expected to-day, seemed to have such a desire for it that I gave it to him."

"Gave it " cried D'Artagnan.

"Lord! yes, gave it to him — you can't call it anything but a gift," said Porthos, "for the animal was worth at least a hundred and fifty louis, and the stingy fellow would only give me eighty!"

"Without the saddle?" said Aramis.

"Yes, without the saddle."

"You will please to observe, gentlemen," said Athos, "that Porthos has made the best bargain of any of us."

And then there was a roar of laughter, much to poor Porthos's astonishment. But when he was informed of the cause of their hilarity, he took part in it, as usual, boisterously.

"At any rate we are all in cash, aren't we?" said D'Artagnan.

"Well, for my part," said Athos, "I found Aramis's Spanish wine so good that I sent on a hamper of sixty bottles of it with the lackeys. That has weakened my purse not a little."

"And I," said Aramis, "you can imagine that I had given almost my last sou to the church of Montdidier and the Jesuits of Amiens — that I, moreover, had formed engagements which I had to keep. I ordered masses for myself, and for you, gentlemen, which will be said, gentlemen, and for which I have not the least doubt we will be very much the better."

"And I," said Porthos, "do you think my sprain cost me nothing, without reckoning Mousqueton's wound, on account of which the surgeon was obliged to come twice a day, and who charged me double on the pretext that this stupid Mousqueton had allowed himself to be wounded in a part which people generally show only to apothecaries. So I advised him to try never to get wounded there any more."

"Ay, ay!" said Athos, exchanging a smile with D'Artagnan and Aramis; "it is very clear you acted nobly with regard to the poor lad; that is like a good master."

"In short," said Porthos, "when all my expenses are paid, I shall have, at most, thirty crowns left."

"And I about ten pistoles," said Aramis.

"Well, then, D'Artagnan, it appears that you and I are the Crœsuses of the society. How much have you left of your hundred pistoles?"

"Of my hundred pistoles? Why, in the first place, I gave you fifty."

"You did?"

"Zounds! yes."

"Ah! yes, so you did; I recollect now."

"Then I paid the landlord six."

"What a beast that landlord was! Why did you give him six pistoles?"

"Why, you told me to give them to him yourself!"

"Ah! so I did; but I am too good-natured. In short, how much have you left?"

"Twenty-five pistoles," said D'Artagnan.

"And I," said Athos, taking some small change from his pocket, "I—"

"You? Why, nothing!"

"'Pon my word! so little that it is not worth reckoning in with the general stock."

"Now, then, let us calculate how much we possess in all."

"Porthos?"

"Thirty crowns."

"Aramis?"

"Ten pistoles."

"And you, D'Artagnan?"

"Twenty-five."

"That makes in all—" said Athos.

"Four hundred and seventy-five livres!" said D'Artagnan, who reckoned like Archimedes.

"Then on our arrival in Paris we shall still have four hundred, besides the trappings," said Porthos.

"But our troop horses?" said Aramis.

"Well, we will take two of the four lackeys' horses for the masters, and we will draw lots for them; the four hundred livres will be sufficient to furnish half a mount for the third of us, and then we will give all our loose change to D'Artagnan, of the steady hand, who will go and play in the first gaming-house we come to. There, that's arranged."

"Let us finish the dinner, then," said Porthos; "it is getting cold."

The four friends, having set their minds at ease with regard to the future, did honor to the repast, the remains of which

were abandoned to MM. Mousqueton, Bazin, Planchet, and Grimaud.

On arriving in Paris, D'Artagnan found a letter from M. de Tréville, informing him that, at his request, the king had just promised him his immediate admission into the musketeers.

As this was the height of D'Artagnan's worldly ambition, — apart, of course, from his desire of finding Madame Bonacieux, — he ran, full of joy, to seek his comrades, whom he had left only half an hour before. He found them very sad and deeply preoccupied. They were assembled in council at the residence of Athos, which always indicated an event of some seriousness.

M. de Tréville had just informed them that since it was his Majesty's fixed intention to open the campaign on the first of May, they must immediately get ready all their equipments.

The four philosophers looked at one another in a state of bewilderment. M. de Tréville never joked in matters relating to discipline.

"And what do you reckon your equipments will cost?" said D'Artagnan.

"Oh, we can scarcely venture to say. We have just made our calculations with Spartan niggardliness, and we each require fifteen hundred livres."

"Four times fifteen make sixty — ah! six thousand livres," said Athos.

"For my part, I think," said D'Artagnan, "with a thousand livres each — it is true I do not speak as a Spartan, but as a *procureur* — "

The word *procureur* roused Porthos.

"Stop!" said he; "I have an idea."

"Well, that's something; for my part, I have not the shadow of one," said Athos coolly. "But as to D'Artagnan, the hope of soon being one of us, gentlemen, has made him crazy. A thousand livres! I declare I want two thousand myself."

"Four times two make eight, then," said Aramis; "it is eight thousand that we want to complete our outfit of which it is true we have already the saddles."

"One thing more!" said Athos, waiting till D'Artagnan, who was going to thank M. de Tréville, had shut the door; "one thing more! That beautiful diamond which glitters on our friend's finger. What the devil! D'Artagnan is too good a comrade to leave his brothers in embarrassment while he wears a king's ransom on his middle finger.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HUNT FOR EQUIPMENTS.

The most preoccupied of the four friends was certainly D'Artagnan, although D'Artagnan, as a guardsman, would be much more easily equipped than the musketeers, who were all grandees. But our Gascon cadet was, as may have been observed, of a provident and almost avaricious character, and at the same time — explain the paradox — so vain-glorious as almost to rival Porthos.

To this preoccupation of his vanity, D'Artagnan, at this moment, joined an uneasiness much less selfish. Notwithstanding all his inquiries respecting Madame Bonacieux, he could obtain no news concerning her. M. de Tréville had spoken of her to the queen; the queen did not know where the mercer's young wife was, but had promised to have a search made for her. But this promise was very vague, and did not at all reassure D'Artagnan.

Athos did not leave his chamber; he made up his mind not to risk a single step to provide for his equipment.

"We have still a fortnight before us," said he to his friends; "well, if, at the end of a fortnight, I have found nothing, or, rather, if nothing has come to find me, as I am too good a Catholic to kill myself with a pistol-bullet, I will seek a good cause of quarrel with four of his Eminence's guards, or with eight Englishmen. I will fight until one of them has killed me, which, considering the number, cannot fail to happen. It will then be said of me that I died for the king, so that I shall have performed my duty without having needed an outfit."

Porthos continued to walk about, with his hands behind him, shaking his head, and repeating:

"I shall follow up my idea."

Aramis, anxious, and negligently dressed, said nothing.

It may be seen by these disastrous details that desolation reigned in the community.

The lackeys, on their part, like the coursers of Hippolytus, shared their masters' sadness. Mousqueton collected a store of crusts. Bazin, who had always been inclined to devotion, never quitted the churches. Planchet watched the flies flying. And Grimaud, whom the general distress could not induce to break the silence imposed by his master, heaved sighs enough to melt a stone.

The three friends — for, as we have said, Athos had sworn not to stir a foot to equip himself — the three friends went out, then, early in the morning and returned late at night. They wandered about the streets, looking at every cobble-stone to see whether some passer-by had not dropped a purse. One might have thought that they were following a trail, so attentive were they wherever they went. When they met they looked desolately at each other, as much as to say, "Have you found anything?"

However, as Porthos had first found his idea, and had thought of it earnestly afterwards, he was the first to act. This worthy Porthos was a man of execution. D'Artagnan perceived him one day walking toward the church of St. Leu, and followed him instinctively. He entered the holy place, after having twirled his moustache and pulled his royal, which always announced, on his part, the most triumphant resolutions. As D'Artagnan took some precautions to conceal himself, Porthos believed he had not been seen. D'Artagnan entered behind him; Porthos went and leaned against one side of a pillar. D'Artagnan, still unperceived, leaned against the other side of it.

There happened to be a sermon, and this made the church very full of people. Porthos took advantage of this circumstance to ogle the women. Thanks to Mousqueton's care the exterior was far from announcing his inward distress. His hat was, to be sure, a little worn on the nap, his feather was a little faded, his gold lace was a little tarnished, his laces were decidedly frayed. But in the obscurity of the church all these trifles were not seen, and Porthos was still the handsome Porthos.

D'Artagnan observed, on the bench nearest to the pillar against which he and Porthos were leaning, a sort of ripe beauty, rather yellow and rather dry, but erect and haughty, under her black hood. Porthos's eyes were furtively cast upon this lady, and then roved about at large over the nave.

On her side, the lady, who from time to time blushed, darted with the rapidity of lightning a glance toward the inconstant Porthos, and then immediately Porthos's eyes went wandering over the church anxiously. It was plain that this was a mode of proceeding that deeply piqued the lady in the black hood, for she bit her lips till they bled, scratched the end of her nose, and sat very uneasily in her seat.

Porthos, seeing this, again twirled his moustache, pulled his royal a second time, and began to make signals to a beautiful

lady who was near the choir, and who was not only a beautiful lady, but, also, no doubt, a great lady, for she had behind her a negro boy, who had brought the cushion on which she knelt, and a female servant, who held the emblazoned bag in which was placed the book from which she followed the service.

The lady in the black hood followed through all their wanderings the looks of Porthos, and perceived that they rested on the lady with the velvet cushion, the little negro, and the maid-servant.

Meantime he, Porthos, was playing his game prudently. He employed winks, fingers placed on lips, little assassinating smiles, which really assassinated the disdained beauty.

Therefore, as a *mea culpa*, and in striking her breast, she uttered an "Ahem!" so vigorously that everybody, even the lady with the red cushion, turned round toward her. Porthos paid no attention. Nevertheless, he understood it all, but pretended to be deaf.

The lady of the red cushion produced a great effect — for she was very handsome — on the lady in the black hood, who saw in her a rival to be really dreaded; a great effect on Porthos, who thought her much prettier than the lady in the black hood; a great effect upon D'Artagnan, who recognized in her the lady of Meung, of Calais, and of Dover, whom his persecutor, the man with the scar, had saluted by the name of milady.

D'Artagnan, without losing sight of the lady of the red cushion, continued to watch Porthos's proceedings, which amused him greatly. He guessed that the lady of the black hood was the solicitor's wife of the Rue aux Ours, and this was the more likely because the church of St. Leu was not far from that street.

He guessed, then, by induction, that Porthos was trying to take his revenge for his defeat at Chantilly, when the *procureuse* had proved so refractory with respect to her purse.

But, amid all this, D'Artagnan remarked also that not one countenance responded to Porthos's gallantries. There was nothing but chimeras and illusions. But for a real love, for a true jealousy, is there any other reality than illusions and chimeras?

The sermon over, the solicitor's wife advanced toward the font of holy water. Porthos went before her, and, instead of a finger, dipped his whole hand in. The *procureuse* smiled, thinking that it was for her that Porthos was exerting himself. But she was cruelly and promptly undeceived. When she was only about three steps from him, he turned his head round,

fixing his eyes steadily on the lady of the red cushion, who had risen and was approaching, followed by her black boy and her maid.

When the lady of the red cushion came close to Porthos, Porthos drew his dripping hand from the font. The fair worshipper touched Porthos's great hand with her delicate fingers, smiled as she made the sign of the cross, and left the church.

This was too much for the solicitor's wife. She entertained no doubt that this lady and Porthos were engaged in an intrigue. If she had been a great lady she would have fainted; but as she was only a *procureuse*, she contented herself with saying to the musketeer, with concentrated fury:

"Eh, Monsieur Porthos, you don't offer me any holy water?"

Porthos, at the sound of her voice, started like a man awakened from a sleep of a hundred years.

"Ma — madame!" cried he; "is that you? How is your husband, our dear Monsieur Coquenard? Is he still as stingy as ever? Where can my eyes have been not to have even perceived you during the two hours the sermon has lasted?"

"I was within two paces of you, sir," replied the solicitor's wife; "but you did not perceive me, because you had eyes only for the pretty lady to whom you just now gave the holy water."

Porthos pretended to be confused.

"Ah," said he, "you have noticed —"

"I must have been blind if I had not."

"Yes," said Porthos carelessly, "that is a duchess of my acquaintance, whom I have great trouble to meet on account of her husband's jealousy, and who sent me word that she would come to-day, solely for the purpose of seeing me in this poor church, in this vile quarter."

"Monsieur Porthos," said the *procureuse*, "will you have the kindness to offer me your arm for five minutes? I have something to say to you."

"Certainly, madame," said Porthos, winking to himself, as a gambler does who laughs at the dupe he is about to pluck.

At that moment D'Artagnan was passing in pursuit of milady. He cast a glance at Porthos, and beheld his triumphant look.

"Ah, ha!" said he to himself, reasoning in accordance with the strangely easy morality of that gallant period, "here is one of us, at least, on the road to be equipped in time."

Porthos, yielding to the pressure of the *procureuse's* arm as a boat yields to the rudder, arrived at the cloister Saint

Magloire, a somewhat unfrequented passage, shut in by a turnstile at each end. In the daytime nobody was seen there but beggars devouring their crusts, and children.

"Ah, Monsieur Porthos," cried the *procureuse*, when she was assured that no one a stranger to the population of the locality could either see or hear her, "ah, Monsieur Porthos, you are a great conqueror, it appears!"

"Who, I, madame?" said Porthos, drawing himself up proudly; "how so?"

"And the signals just now, and the holy water? But that lady with her negro boy and her maid must be a princess, at least."

"Zounds! madame, you are mistaken; no, no, she is simply a duchess."

"And that running footman who was waiting at the door, and that carriage with a coachman in full livery, who sat waiting on his seat?"

Porthos had seen neither the footman nor the carriage, but Madame Coquenard, with a jealous woman's eye, had seen everything.

Porthos regretted that he had not at once made the lady of the red cushion a princess.

"Ah, you are quite the pet of the ladies, Monsieur Porthos!" resumed the *procureuse*, with a sigh.

"Why, you may well imagine that; with the person with which nature has endowed me, I am not wanting for ladies' favors."

"Good Lord! how quickly men forget!" cried the *procureuse*, raising her eyes to heaven.

"Less quickly than the women, in my opinion," replied Porthos. "As a proof, I, madame, I may say I was your victim, when wounded, dying, I was abandoned by the surgeons. I, the offspring of a noble family, placed reliance upon your friendship, but I nearly died of my wounds at first, and of hunger afterwards, in a beggarly inn at Chantilly, and not once did you even deign to reply to the burning letters I addressed to you."

"But, Monsieur Porthos —" murmured the solicitor's wife, who began to feel that, judged by the conduct of the greatest ladies of the time, she was wrong.

"I! who had sacrificed for you the Baroness of —"

"Well, I know you did."

"The Countess of —"

"Monsieur Porthos, do not overwhelm me quite!"

"The Duchess of —"

"Monsieur Porthos, be generous!"

"You are right, madame, and I will not finish."

"But my husband would not hear of lending —"

"Madame Coquenard," said Porthos, "remember the first letter you wrote me, and which I preserve engraven in my memory."

The *procureuse* uttered a groan.

"Besides," said she, "the sum you required me to borrow was rather large."

"Madame Coquenard, I gave you the preference. I had but to write to the Duchess of — I won't repeat her name, for I am incapable of compromising a woman; but this I know, that I had but to write to her, and she would have sent me fifteen hundred."

The *procureuse* let fall a tear.

"Monsieur Porthos," said she, "I can assure you you have severely punished me; and if in the time to come you should find yourself in a similar situation, you have only to apply to me."

"Fie, madame, fie!" said Porthos, as if disgusted; "let us not talk about money, if you please. It is humiliating."

"Then you no longer love me!" said the solicitor's wife, slowly and sadly.

Porthos maintained a majestic silence.

"And is this your reply? Alas! I understand."

"Think of the offence you have committed toward me, madame! It remains here!" said Porthos, placing his hand on his heart, and pressing it strongly.

"I will repair it; indeed, I will, my dear Porthos."

"Besides, what did I ask of you?" resumed Porthos, with a good-natured shrug of the shoulders. "A loan, nothing more! After all, I am not an unreasonable man. I know you are not rich, Madame Coquenard, and that your husband is obliged to bleed his poor clients to squeeze a few paltry crowns from them. Oh! if you were a duchess, a marchioness, or a countess, it would be quite a different thing; it would be unpardonable."

The solicitor's wife was piqued.

"Please know, Monsieur Porthos," said she, "that my strong-box, though it may be only the strong-box of a solicitor's wife, is better filled than those of all your ruined minxes."

"That, then, doubles the offence," said Porthos, disengaging his arm from the *procureuse's*; "for, if you are rich, Madame Coquenard, then there is no excuse for your refusal."

"When I said rich," replied the solicitor's wife, who saw that she had gone too far, "you must not take the word literally. I am not exactly rich, I am only pretty well off."

"Come, madame," said Porthos, "let us say no more upon the subject, I beg of you. You misunderstand me — all sympathy is extinct between us."

"Ungrateful man that you are!"

"Ah! I advise you to complain!" said Porthos.

"Begone, then, to your beautiful duchess. I will detain you no longer."

"And she is not so shabby, in my opinion."

"Now, Monsieur Porthos, once more, and this is the last! Do you love me still?"

"Alas! madame," said Porthos, in the most melancholy tone he could assume, "when we are about to enter upon a campaign, a campaign in which my presentiments tell me I shall be killed —"

"Oh! don't talk of such things!" cried the solicitor's wife, bursting into tears.

"Something tells me so," continued Porthos, becoming more and more melancholy.

"Rather say that you have a new love affair."

"No, not so. I speak frankly to you. No new object affects me; and I even feel here, at the bottom of my heart, something which speaks for you. But in a fortnight's time, as you know, or perhaps you do not know, this fatal campaign is to open. I shall be frightfully busy providing for my equipment. Then I am obliged to make a journey to my family, in the very depths of Brittany, to obtain the sum necessary for my departure."

Porthos observed a last struggle between love and avarice.

"And as," continued he, "the duchess you saw at the church has estates near to those of my family, we mean to make the journey together. Journeys, you know, appear much shorter when you travel two in company."

"Have you no friends in Paris, then, Monsieur Porthos?" said the solicitor's wife.

"I thought I had," said Porthos, resuming his melancholy air; "but I have clearly seen that I was mistaken."

"You have some, Monsieur Porthos, you have some!" cried the solicitor's wife, in a transport that surprised even herself. "Come to our house to-morrow. You are my aunt's son, consequently my cousin. You come from Noyon, in Picardy;

you have several lawsuits at Paris and no attorney. Can you recollect all that?"

"Perfectly, madame."

"Come at dinner-time."

"Very well."

"And be on your guard before my husband, who is rather shrewd, notwithstanding his seventy-six years."

"Seventy-six years! Plague on it! that's a fine age!" replied Porthos.

"An advanced age, you mean, Monsieur Porthos. Yes, the poor man may leave me a widow at any moment," continued she, throwing a significant glance at Porthos. "Fortunately, by our marriage-contract, the survivor comes into the possession of everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything."

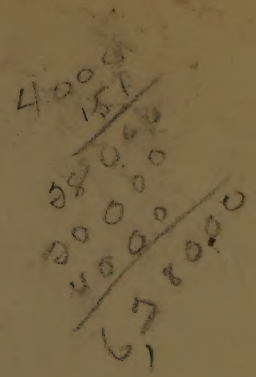
"You are a woman of precaution, I see, my dear Madame Coquenard," said Porthos, squeezing the *procureuse's* hand tenderly.

"We are, then, reconciled, dear Monsieur Porthos?" said she, simpering.

"For life," said Porthos, in the same manner.

"Till we meet again, then, dear traitor!"

"Till we meet again, my forgetful charmer!"

"To-morrow, my angel!"

"To-morrow, flame of my life!"